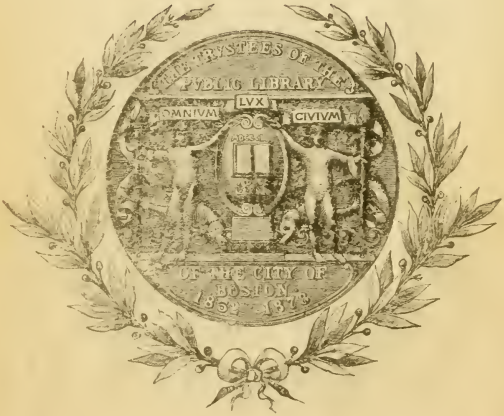

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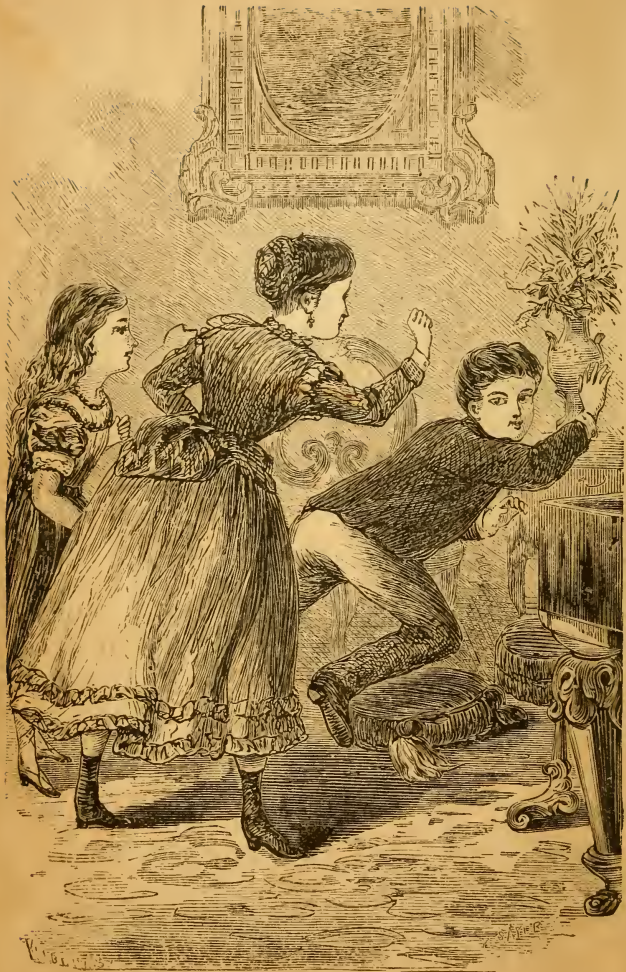

GOOSY GANDER CLUB.—Page 25.

THE PROVERB SERIES.

ILLUSTRATED.

A WRONG CONFESSED
IS HALF REDRESSED

LEE & SHEPARD, BOSTON.

KILBURN SC. R. SAYER DEL

THE PROVERB SERIES.

A WRONG CONFESSED

IS HALF REDRESSED.

BY

MRS. BRADLEY,

AUTHOR OF "BIRDS OF A FEATHER," "HANDSOME IS THAT HANDSOME DOES," "BREAD UPON THE WATERS," "DOUGLASS FARM," ETC.

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TO

MY "ROSE OF JUNE."

WITH SWEETEST MEMORIES OF THE CHILDHOOD PAST;
LOVING THOUGHTS OF THE GIRLHOOD PRESENT;
DEAREST HOPES FOR THE WOMANHOOD
TO COME.

CEDAR GLEN, ON THE HUDSON,
October, 1869.

THE PROVERB SERIES.

1. BIRDS OF A FEATHER.
2. FINE FEATHERS DO NOT MAKE FINE BIRDS.
3. HANDSOME IS THAT HANDSOME DOES.
4. A WRONG CONFESSED IS HALF REDRESSED.
5. ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.
6. ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER.

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A WRONG CONFESSED IS HALF REDRESSED.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROWN COTTAGE.

DR. GUILFORD'S cottage was one of the "cosy" places in Englewood. It stood far back from the village street, so surrounded with trees, and shrubbery, and flowers, that one seemed to come upon it unawares, like a bird's nest in a bush. The yard in front was full of old-fashioned, sweet-smelling flowers, big bushes of lilac, and sweet syringa, and those brown "strawberry shrubs" that children hide in their bosoms for the fragrant odor, with great beds of moss pinks, and purple pansies, and delicious little violets hiding away in the grass.

Around the roots of the two large fir trees at the gate they grew too thickly for hiding, and people stopped many a time to steal a handful

of the blue-eyed darlings as they passed. It was pretty well known that Mrs. Guilford would not mind; she loved flowers so dearly herself that she was always willing to give them to others to enjoy; and when the violet-stealers walked up through the pretty green yard to the brown cottage, — as they often did, with their plunder in their hands, — she was quite ready to come out with her garden scissors and cut tulips and hyacinths to add to the bouquet.

At this rate she had plenty of visitors, one may be sure. They came in May, when the lilies of the valley were breathing out their dainty fragrance; in June, when the roses and honeysuckles had their own story to tell; in July and August, when heliotrope and verbena overran the beds — all the year round, in short, for Mrs. Guilford always had flowers, in doors or out; and, more than that, always had a smile and a welcome, warm as sunshine, sweet as May blossoms, for everybody.

It was this sunshiny way of hers that made the brown cottage cosy within, as it was pretty without. There was nothing costly or fine in the rooms; the parlor, the dining-room, the sitting-room, and the nursery, all had the look

of being well used. Books lay about as if they were read; the piano stood open, as if music was a habit; writing materials, drawing materials, fancy work, and work baskets, with the signs of more practical matters, were seen everywhere; not in slovenly or careless fashion, — for Mrs. Guilford allowed no untidiness, — but with a home-like air of cheerful occupation. People liked to come there, and all sorts of people did come; and nobody felt in the way or not wanted. And, better still, those who lived there liked no other place so well.

To the doctor himself it was the most perfect home in the world. He rode about from one patient to another all day long, and now was in a stately mansion that would have swallowed up half a dozen brown cottages, and now in a hovel. And he would as soon have thought of changing his own little nest for one as the other. It held all the sweetness he wanted in life, for his wife and children were there. And the young people, for their part, — in spite of having ambitions and vain longings, as young people must, — found "no place like home," after all.

There were three of them together in the cool, shady parlor one warm June afternoon — Laura,

a girl of fourteen, with bright, dark eyes, heavy brown hair braided in a thick coil about her small, shapely head, and a sensible and good-humored, rather than pretty face; Sydney, her twin brother, very much like her; and little Fan, a blue-eyed and flaxen-haired maiden of five years, who sat at her ease in the broad window seat, making paper dolls.

Laura had been having a practice-hour at the piano, and Sydney had just come in with a pile of books to "do his lessons" for the next day. He laid them down on a table near the piano, and pulled away the piece of music that Laura was practising.

"Time's up, ma'am, and I don't want any more hammering; I'm going to learn my lessons," was his saucy greeting.

"Well, that's cool—isn't it?" Laura looked up with a good-humored remonstrance. "Why can't you learn your lessons somewhere else?"

"Because there's somebody in the sitting-room chattering, and somebody in the dining-room setting the table for tea, and Archie's on the rampage in the nursery, and up in my room it's as hot as pepper," said Sydney, categori-

cally. "It's nice and comfortable in here — would be, at least, if you'd be quiet."

"As if I wasn't!" exclaimed Laura, swinging round on the music-stool. "You've put a stop to my noise, but don't curl up the edges of my 'Weber,' Syd. I hate things that are mussed."

"You'll be an old maid, if you're so particular."

"I don't care if I am; I won't have my music dog's-eared, at all events," said Laura, putting away her *Letzter Gedanke* in a neat portfolio. "And another thing, Syd: mamma objects to dusty shoes in the parlor — though you can't say that *she's* an old maid."

Sydney looked down at his feet, and made a grimace. "I forgot my shoes," he exclaimed, and ran out of the room; coming back two minutes later with a clean pair on.

"Will that suit your ladyship?" he asked; "and may I have the privilege of studying my lessons in your drawing-room now?"

"Yes, if you won't tilt your chair back, and put your feet on the table. That's impolite in the presence of ladies, to say nothing of spoiling the furniture."

"Never mind the furniture," said Sydney,

easily. "We haven't got any that's too good to be used; that's one comfort."

"Well, I do believe it is," laughed Laura; "though sometimes I wish we had velvet carpets, and mirrors, and rosewood *étagères*, and silk curtains, as the Johnsons have. Their drawing-room is perfectly *elegant*, Sydney."

"I bet it isn't as comfortable as this," said Sydney, complacently. "I bet they keep it shut up for company, and don't have any good of it themselves."

"O, of course," assented Laura. "I went there with mamma once last winter, and we couldn't see where to sit down, until the servant opened a crack in the shutters. It was dark as a pocket, and cold as a barn; but when the daylight *was* let in, the room looked splendid."

"I'd rather have one that wasn't so splendid, where the daylight could stay in all the time," answered her brother. "In fact, I don't want anything different from what I've got already. I'm thankful mamma hasn't any ridiculous notions."

"So am I," responded Laura. "Only fancy our not being allowed to sit in any room in the

house when we choose! But Annie Carey says that Cathy Johnson's mother scolds like — *fury* — if the girls go into that precious room without permission. Think of mamma doing such a thing!"

"Scolding like fury? Excuse me, I couldn't," said Sydney, with a superior air, "any more than I could think of her making use of such an expression."

"O, dear!" cried Laura; "how fine we are all at once! *You* never make use of expressions, of course. You only *bet* when it would be proper to suppose, and *skedaddle* when you mean to run away, and talk about things being *bully* and *hunky-dory*, and —"

"Where's my 'Keetel,' I wonder?" interrupted Sydney, irrelevantly. "I brought it in with me, I'm sure. Did you meddle with my books, Fan, when I went out just now?"

"Fan hasn't stirred," said Laura, laughing; "and there's your 'Keetel' on the floor, where you dropped it yourself. I don't wonder you want to change the subject; but you mustn't do French lessons just this minute: I want to talk to you."

"Of course — you always want to talk," he

retorted, taking his revenge. "Some more gossip about your neighbors, and how Annie Carey told Georgie White that Cathy Johnson's cousin Sue heard Nannie Cox's mother scold like fury!"

"You be still!" and Laura gave a twitch to his curly locks — her favorite mode of punishing his boyish impertinences. "As if I ever said anything like that! It takes a boy for such a string of stuff — and Nannie Cox's mother *never* scolds. She's almost as nice as ours."

"O, by the way," exclaimed Sydney, with a sudden recollection, "Charlie Cox told me something to-day. He says the old Van Wyck place is sold, and a family from New York are coming up. They're going to have it all pulled to pieces, and made over again as fine as a fiddle, Charlie says."

"Pull the old house to pieces! what a shame!" Laura cried, indignantly. "Why, it's like a picture as it is."

"O, not taken down, but overhauled, you know, and cleaned out, and painted up, and all sorts of things. Charlie says he saw the man that bought it. He's a crusty old fellow, with

goggles and a knobby cane, and Charlie said he looked cross as Ajax."

"I thought it was girls that talked gossip," said Laura, significantly.

"So it is. That's not gossip; it's *news*. Can't you see the difference?"

"Yes, just as much as between tweedledum and tweedledee. Scolding like fury and looking cross as Ajax come to much the same thing in the end, sir."

"I guess I'll do my exercises," drawled Sydney. "You're much too smart for such warm weather. Fan, where's my pencil?" turning to the quiet little figure in the window.

"I'm usin' it," was the sedate answer.

"Well, I want it. Hand over."

"Ain't done with it yet. Got to finish chimmin' my doll's frock."

"*Chimmin'?* what's that?"

"She means trimming," put in Laura. "Let's see your doll's frock, Fan. O, what ecstatic scallops!" as the child held up her work with a pleased look. "Is that for Kitty Clover or blue-eyed Mary?"

"No, it's Lady Flora's; and I've did another,

too, that's prettier," said Fan, eagerly. "Look here."

"You've *did* it — what did I tell you about that yesterday?" exclaimed Sydney.

"I mean I *done* it," she said, with such a complacent assurance of being right now that Sydney shouted.

"You're a little grammatical heathen; it's no use trying to teach you," he laughed. "Give me my pencil."

But Fan held it tight, and made up a grievous lip.

"Don't take it away, Syd; let her keep it," said Laura, quickly. "It's early yet, and I've got something to tell you, truly. Come over here, on the sofa."

"It's all nonsense, I know;" but he did as she wished, all the same.

"Now, then," as he sat down by her, "you know, Sydney, our sewing society has decided to have a fair."

"O, don't I?" he answered, comically. — "Haven't you told me sixteen times before?"

"No, I haven't, you goose. And never mind if I have. I'm going to tell you something now

that will give you an interest in it. It's been proposed to invite you to join the society."

"Me!" exclaimed Sydney. "Much obliged to you; but I can't see it. What would a boy look like in a sewing society?"

"Boys might as well make themselves useful, once in a way," retorted Laura, "as for girls to do it all the time. Any way, we've made a resolution —"

"To buy thimbles for the academy?" interrupted Sydney. "I'll tell all the fellows to look out for 'em."

"Don't be silly. We've no money to waste on clumsy fingers, and we can do our own sewing. It isn't that we want of the boys."

"What is it, then?" he asked more seriously, as he saw that Laura was really in earnest.

"Well, I dare say you will laugh; and I don't know if you will be willing — you or any of the other boys. But we've been talking about it in the society, and we thought perhaps you, and Harry Walker, and Charlie Cox, and Sam Haven, and the rest of our brothers, you know, — we shan't ask any strangers, of course, — would like to be honorary members. Now don't laugh," — for Sydney's face was puckered up with a droll

expression, — "but just hear me out. We're going to have a fair, and we want it to be real nice, and, of course, we want all the help we can get."

"Lots of help you'll get out of boys!" Sydney interpolated, derisively. "Can they make pin-cushions and book-marks?"

"*Some* boys can, for I've seen them."

"Muffs!" was his comment.

"No such thing. Sam Haven isn't a muff, you know, and he worked a beautiful pin-cushion for his aunt. It was in all the shades of scarlet, and *very* nicely done. He used to amuse himself with it last winter, in the long evenings; Carrie told me so. However," she added, hastily, "it isn't anything of that sort we want, as I told you before. What we *do* want is something that boys can do better than girls, because they have penknives and tools, and are always whittling."

"O, I see," said Sydney, "you want little brackets, and picture-frames, and wooden knick-knacks."

"Yes, exactly; and some boys are so clever about those things. Carrie Haven showed me a book-rack that her cousin, Bert Holroyd, had

made for her. The ends were all carved in open-work, with her initial in the centre. It was just as handsome as any of those things one buys in the shops."

"That's all very well for Bert Holroyd," said Sydney, with a shrug of his shoulders. "But everybody isn't a genius in wood-work. *I* couldn't do it, you know."

"You can make beautiful boats, though," said Laura, warmly. "That toy ship you rigged for Archie was pretty enough to sell at any fair. And didn't you make a bedstead for Flossie's doll, and a paper-knife for me — besides all those building-blocks in the nursery? You can do lots of things!"

"O, yes — that sort of trash," he answered, coloring up, though, with pleasure at her praise. "If a fellow can be — what do you call it? — an honorary member on the strength of that — "

"Then you will?" asked Laura, eagerly. "If *you* join us, the other boys won't refuse, I know; and really, Syd, we'll have some fun out of it as well as work. We'll let you come to the meetings sometimes, and may be we'll have a picnic."

"That's jolly — but what for?"

"Why, to collect material. You'll want wood to whittle, and we want mosses, and ferns, and wild flowers, to work up into all sorts of pretty things. Little Olive — Elsie Raymond's lame sister, you know — makes the most beautiful crosses, and wreaths, and moss baskets. She hasn't anything else to do, poor little thing, and Elsie says she's quite delighted to think of working for the fair."

"Have you said anything about it to any of the other fellows?" asked Sydney.

"*I* haven't, of course; but I dare say Lizzie, and Carrie, and Gertie, and the rest, have been talking to their brothers, as I have to you, this afternoon. It was only to-day, at recess, that we decided on the measure," continued Laura, with a little important air. "Boys are not always desirable, you see. Sometimes they're very much in the way."

"O, if that's the case —" Sidney began mischievously.

"But it isn't in *this* case," she made haste to add. "We decided that the boys we meant to invite could help us a great deal, if they chose. So we all agreed to propose it this afternoon; and then, if it's settled, we'll have a meeting next

Saturday, and arrange things, and present you all with badges of membership."

"With *wh-a-t?*" Sydney jumped up with so absurd a face that Laura burst into a laugh. "Have we got to wear badges, like a Sunday school procession? O, come now, that's a little too much."

"No, it isn't, either," she insisted, merrily. "You are going to have beautiful blue ribbons, all embroidered with the motto of the society, and they'll look elegant on your military uniform. The girls will wear them, too; and then everybody will know we are one society. I think you ought to feel highly honored."

"To make a guy of myself! and what's the precious motto, I'd like to know?"

"O, that's the trouble," confessed Laura, with an anxious look. "If we have you boys in, we can't call ourselves just the sewing society any longer. We ought to have some kind of a mutual name, and a Latin motto, and they've all left it for me to choose. What *shall* it be? See if you can't think of something."

Sydney puckered up his forehead, and pondered diligently for a minute. Presently a mis-

chievous twinkle came into the corner of his eye, and he said, demurely, —

"I've thought of a name, and perhaps I can fit it with a motto, too. Wait a minute."

"Tell me what the name is first," she answered, eagerly.

"Guess. I'll give you the initials — G. G. C."

"G. G. C.!" Laura repeated, looking mystified. "How can I tell what that means? I can't think of anything but Good Girls' Club, and of course you wouldn't be so ridiculous."

"O, of course not," he responded, with the air of one who would scorn to do such a thing. "Try again."

"What's the use of guessing when you can tell me? Don't be aggravating, Syd, if you *are* a boy."

"If I tell you, will you promise to adopt it, and work the initials on your badges?"

"No, indeed," said Laura, promptly, suspecting mischief; "not till I know whether it's suitable."

"Take that for granted," he persisted, with the same virtuous air. "I assure you it couldn't be more so. Takes in boys and girls both, and describes the whole thing perfectly."

"Very good; but I won't risk my promise till I hear it. What does G. G. C. stand for?"

"It stands for — what a doubting Thomas you are!" he exclaimed, suddenly, moving away from the sofa.

"Dear me! how well it fits the initials!" was her quick retort. "If that's the best you can do —"

"Well, if you must know," Sydney began, with a wicked look, that prepared Laura for what was coming, "and you're so stupid that you can't guess, it stands for — *Goosy Gander Club!*"

And with a shout of saucy laughter at his own smartness, he jumped aside to escape the dash at him which former experiences with Laura had taught him to expect. But he did not take account of a hassock that stood in the way, and it proved a pitfall to him. Plunging over it, he came down head foremost, and lay at her mercy next minute, with his heels in the air. Such a splendid opportunity was not to be neglected; and Laura pounced upon him, struggling and choking with laughter, and pinched and pommelled him to her heart's content. Little Fan looked on with demure enjoyment of the

fun, maintaining a strict neutrality, in spite of Sydney's appeals for help; and Laura made him eat "humble pie" to her complete satisfaction, before she allowed him to regain his "centre of gravity."

CHAPTER II.

"AMBO."

MRS. GUILFORD believed in the policy of non-intervention, with certain limitations. She heard the tumble and scuffle in the parlor, and listened attentively, to discover if there were any sounds of anger, or real trouble. Not perceiving any, she chose to let them settle the matter after their own fashion. She was prompt to interfere, restrain, and prevent, if fun degenerated into rudeness, or dispute into real vexation of spirit; but that seldom happened, quarrelling in earnest not being a habit at the brown cottage.

On the contrary, the rule of the house was, "*Little children, love one another.*" It had been the nursery motto from the beginning of things, and had been kept before all eyes by a variety of ingenious devices, which the doctor used to laugh at, though he heartily approved all the same.

It hung up, as a splendid illuminated text, — all blue, and red, and gold, — over the crib where Laura and Sydney used to tumble together in their childhood. Then it made an ornamental inscription on the cornice of Laura's first baby-house, and shone conspicuously on the locomotive of Sydney's first train of cars. Letter blocks had been made to spell out the sweet precept, and picture-books to illustrate it, with a patient ingenuity on the part of the loving mother, until it became the first practical lesson of life to all the little Guilfords. She found it easier to teach them duty to God and obedience to parents, when they had learned that love was the rule and reason for all goodness.

So it happened that, while they all had their share of faults and follies, — who hasn't? — they grew up in an atmosphere of love, that made them forbearing and considerate, and prevented the possibility of the wrangling and unkindness that are too often seen among brothers and sisters. Their disagreements never lasted long, or held bitterness, because they loved each other, and could not bear the pain of separation, even in feeling.

In the present affair there was nothing but

fun, which Sydney enjoyed as much as Laura, in spite of having got rather the worst of it. He scrambled up, all flushed and tumbled, with his curly hair like a mop, and his eyes sparkling with merry excitement.

"Don't you touch me — don't you dare!" Laura screamed, for there was a wicked look in them that boded retaliation. His only answer was, to snatch her suddenly, and whirl her round and round till they were both dizzy as tops with the wild waltz, and sank together exhausted upon the sofa.

"Now, then, let us have peace! as General Grant says," he gasped, out of breath. "Tit for tat's fair play, Miss Laura, and one good turn deserves another."

"It's nice to quote proverbs, and 'our distinguished president,'" pouted Laura, with a rueful face. "But look at my hair!"

The glossy braids were all tumbling apart in a picturesque disorder that she knew would not be admissible at the tea-table. It was something of a task to rearrange them in the shapely coil upon which she prided herself, and she had her lessons to learn, besides, before tea. So she had to content herself with a parting pull at her

brother's equally dishevelled hair, and run up stairs to make herself tidy again, as speedily as possible.

Sydney was deep in his French exercise when she came back. Little Fan had given up the pencil, and gone to look for other amusement, and the room was quiet enough now. So Laura settled herself soberly to her tasks, and for the next hour there was no sound heard but the scratch of pencils on paper, and the little humming whisper with which girls always get their lessons by heart.

They were both good students, as boys and girls go. Sydney was a day pupil at the Military Academy, and ranked well in all his classes; Laura was with Mrs. Delancy, at The Glen, a classmate with our old friends Elsie Raymond and May Barnard, and ambitious to keep up with their steady march of improvement. The one study-hour at home — which was all the doctor allowed, on hygienic principles — was generally made the most of by both of them; and when it came to a close this afternoon, with the tinkle of the tea-bell, a good deal had been accomplished.

The exercises were made out correctly, and

Sydney had learned his irregular verbs, worked out his "theorems," and construed his page of Sallust; while Laura had mastered her tasks in French and English grammar, and taken various steps, geographical and historical, in a general pursuit of knowledge.

They were quite hungry enough to enjoy their tea when it came; and tea, at the brown cottage, was always what Laura called "nice." Not with exclusive reference to the celestial beverage, which was nowhere more so than at Mrs. Guilford's table, but as a generally convivial occasion, when everybody was expected to be what Sydney called "jolly."

The doctor made a conscience of coming home to it punctually. His breakfasts were apt to be hurried, and his dinner very often forgotten, in the excitement of an urgent "case;" but he managed, as a rule, to so arrange the day's work, that he could take his evening meal in leisurely comfort with his family. This was the children's hour for seeing their father, discussing their various plans and projects that required his sanction, preferring petitions, and obtaining indulgences. They circled the pretty round table, looking as fresh and sweet, in the doctor's eyes, as the

flowers that always ornamented it. Their clean, smiling faces, their shining hair, their little white pinafores, were all beautiful to him, and always delightful; his heart expanded with the same genial happiness every evening as he took his seat amongst them, whatever the cares or vexations of the day might have been before. For this hour everything else was put by, and the young people had it all their own way with him.

There was chatter enough, as usual, to-night. The pinafores had their father's ear first by common consent, and every one of them had a special tale for him. Archie, the three-year-old "baby," dumpling cheeked, and slow of speech, stumbled through a deeply-interesting history of his "yubber ball," that he dropped down the well, and Sydney fished up again in the bucket. Fan had found a quarter — a real silver quarter — at the root of a weed in her own little garden. Papa must speculate, as everybody else had speculated vainly before, upon the how and when of its getting there, and give his advice, moreover, upon the best investment for such a fortune. Flossy, the chatterbox, who always had adventures to relate, made a marvellous story about a

strange cat that *almost* caught the canary. And Sydney and Laura chimed in, as they got opportunity, with a jumble of school matters, sewing society, fairs, and honorary members, until the doctor grew fairly bewildered with the confusion of tongues.

"It's a little more than usual to-night, it seems to me," he said, resignedly. "If you wouldn't all talk at once, I might get an idea of what you are talking about. Who's going to have a fair? Fan, on the strength of that silver quarter?"

"O, papa, *no!*" Laura began, and Flossy caught it up, glibly.

"It's the sewing society, papa, *you* know; and I wish I was as big as Laura, so I could belong to it. Can't I have a quarter, though, as well as Fan? I dug up every weed in my garden, but *I* couldn't find one!"

"O, and don't you think," exclaimed little Fan, with a lofty air of wisdom, "she dug up ever so many of her pretty flowers! Did she think anybody planted quarters? *I* told her not to."

"People plant funnier things than quarters sometimes," said the doctor. "I was reading,

the other day, Fan, about a little boy who planted his shoes and sowed his stockings."

Fan looked scornful. "They didn't come up, I know," she returned, confidently.

"Yes, they did, too," put in Sydney, quickly, who knew the story. "Isn't it true, papa?"

The doctor laughed, and nodded, "seeing the point," and Fan's eyes grew round with incredulous wonder.

"Stockin's an' shoes don't grow," she persisted, with a puzzled look, elevating her little red morocco boot to the level of the table, as if to assure herself more fully. "Things can't grow without roots — don't I know?"

"*Did* they really, papa? Tell me about it," pleaded Flossy.

"Why, it was a little boy who was fond of making experiments — like you," said the doctor. "He slipped away from his nurse one day, and was having a fine time in the garden, all alone, when the nurse missed him, and found him out. He had the hoe and the watering-pot, and there was a great deal of fresh mud on his face, and hands, and clothes; but that was nothing new. The singular thing was, that his little toes were all bare, and there was no sign of his shoes

and stockings. The nurse scolded, and shook him, and slapped him, but he wouldn't tell what he had done with them, until at last she declared she would shut him up in the dark cellar. And that was too much for his courage; so he sobbed out, 'I pup- planted my shoes, an' sus- sowed my stockin's!'"

"Poor little fellow!" exclaimed Mrs. Guilford. "He thought he was going to raise a crop of shoes and stockings."

"Yes, and the heartless nurse crushed his hopes by digging up the seed," laughed the doctor. "That's the way they came up, Fan — they were *dug* up."

Fan turned up her little nose at Sydney, and observed, loftily, that "*he* thought he was smart; but didn't she know all the time? *Anything* could come up if it was *took* up."

And Archie dropped the big strawberry that was half way to his mouth, to state solemnly that "his yubber ball comed up, *too*."

Whereupon everybody laughed again, as if the little dumpling had said something wonderfully witty and clever. But laughing comes so easy, if people are only in a good humor!

"I do think, though," Laura put in, pleading-

ly, "that you might talk to me a little now, papa. Can't the children be quiet? I want to tell you about our fair, and I want you to take an interest in it."

"Fairs!" exclaimed the doctor, mischievously. "They are the most ruinous things in the world. They swallow up principal as well as interest. Don't ask me."

"Of course I want some money, by and by," said Laura, coolly. "But it's only advice just now. We're going to reconstruct our society, you know. We've only been girls before, and now —"

"You are going to make boys of yourselves? Good gracious!" The doctor raised his hands with an air of dismay.

"Not tomboys, I hope," Mrs. Guilford added, merrily. And Laura gave her shoulders a little jerk of comical impatience.

"O, dear! how everybody does interrupt! Now, between you, you've scattered all my thoughts."

"Soon said of thistle-down," was her father's retort; "but I'll blow you back a feather. You were going to reconstruct the girls, you said; well, that wouldn't be so bad for some of them."

"Meaning me, of course," Laura returned, composedly. "I know you don't really think it, papa; so I don't mind. What I wanted to tell you was this: that we're going to make honorary members of our brothers, and so we want to give the society a name; something nice and descriptive, and we'd like it to be in Latin. But *I* can't think of anything that will suit."

"Why don't you apply to your honorary members? Here's a Latin scholar that ought to do something for you."

"Not he," Sydney responded, promptly. "He's had his lesson beforehand."

"Deserved it, too. Only think of his impudence, mamma, to give me *Goosy Gander Club* for a name! *Didn't* he deserve to be punished?"

"He got his due, I fancy, and a little over," Mrs. Guilford replied, "if that was the *causa belli* for all the uproar I heard."

"Hear mamma quoting Latin!" cried Sydney. "She is the one to go to, after all, Laura."

But mamma declined the honor, and the doctor was appealed to again, but not with any satisfactory results. Laura was too fastidious to accept any of the hackneyed Latin phrases

which he teasingly offered. She rejected *Semper Idem* as absurd.

"That's the very thing we are *not*, papa," she exclaimed, indignantly. "*Always the same*, when we are just going to be something different! How *would* that look?"

"*Cui Bono*" was offered next; but that was, of course, insulting; "*Nil Desperandum*" was no better; and, on the other hand, "*Summum Bonum*" was too assuming.

"Besides, I could have found all that in the Scholar's Companion," she said, disdainfully. "I want something original, and not as old as the hills."

"And therefore she goes to the dead languages," Sydney interposed, in a "stage aside."

"I don't know what to do for you," said the doctor, in a resigned tone of voice, "unless you'd like *Felix Familia*. It strikes me that it's going to be a kind of Barnum's happy family business."

"No, papa; *felis et canis* is better," Sydney put in slyly. "You know what that is, Laura?"

"Felis sedit by a hole,
Intenti she cum omni soul
Pendere rats,

Mice cucurrant over the floor
In number duo, tres, or more,
Obliti cats — "

repeated the doctor, ridiculously; and Laura gave it up in despair, and was obliged to laugh in spite of herself.

"It's lucky you're on the other side of the table," she flung across to Sydney, "else we'd have *cats and dogs* for tea. Only please to wait, though, till I've finished my strawberries."

"Only please to excuse me," he retorted; "I've finished mine, and with your permission, mamma, I'll run down to the post-office. The mail train's up."

And hardly waiting for her nod of assent, he pushed his chair back, and took a flying leap through the low, open window, out upon the grass-plot beneath.

"I expect that boy will break his neck some day," observed the doctor, calmly.

"I expect he will break my English woodbine," said Mrs. Guilford, getting up to put back in their place the long branches that had been shaken loose by his leap. "I never could understand anybody's preference for going through a window, when a door is so much more handy."

"It is because the window is so much more *leg*-gy," suggested the doctor; and with the laugh that followed this, the tea-table was deserted.

Laura went to look for Sydney's Latin lexicon, and bringing it out upon the piazza, where her father had taken Archie for a swing in the hammock, she declared her intention to find a name for herself, independent of anybody's assistance. The doctor said he admired her spirit, and waited with an amused look to see what she would achieve. For ten minutes her head was bent over the closely-printed pages with a most resolute air; then she closed the book, and announced, gravely, that she had "suited herself," as the Irish "girls" say.

"Well?" said the doctor, interrogatively.

"Well," repeated Laura, assertively, "of course you'll laugh, papa; you've laughed at me all along, but I don't care."

"Laura!" her mother gave her a glance of gentle reproof. "That's not quite the tone to use to papa, dear."

"Well, I do care, then — excuse me. But I mean that papa wouldn't help me, and so I'm going to stick to my choice, any way. It's just

Ambo, both. That's short and simple; and *Una Voce* for a motto, mamma, in remembrance of your advice."

The doctor smiled; but he only said, "You might have done worse, Laura."

The ridicule came from Sydney, who shouted with derision when he heard it. "Why don't you say *Sambo*, and done with it? Then you might send the fair money to the freedmen's bureau."

And he teased her all the evening with singing absurd parodies upon "Champagne Charlie."

"Ambo-Sambo is my name, Sambo-Ambo is my name;
O, won't the honorary fellows rejoice, with Sambo-Ambo for a name!"

CHAPTER III.

THE STAR-BABY.

IN spite of this, Laura's *ipse dixit* prevailed, and the name was unanimously adopted by the society, of which she was, in fact, the principal personage.

She had a fair share of her mother's benevolent disposition, and by force of instinct, as well as example, took pleasure in active charities. She liked to go with her mother to look after poor people, and had often given up her hour of amusement, or pleasant reading, to help in the making or mending of garments intended for them. She also had a way of excusing herself for rough usage of her own dresses on charitable grounds. "The sooner I spoil them, the sooner they'll go to Janie Russell, you know, or somebody else that needs them badly."

Which was logical, but not commendable, or approved by her mother, who argued that neat-

ness and carefulness in personal matters were essential elements of ladyhood; moreover, that the end should never be relied upon to justify the means.

There was a straggling settlement in the outskirts of Englewood which went by the name of Bobtown; Dr. Guilford said that Bob-*tail* would have been more descriptive, and there was certainly no lack of "rag, tag." He had plenty of patients there, however, and attended them as kindly and faithfully as if any good thing had ever come out of Bobtown — in the shape of a fee. None ever had, in his experience; but the doctor's gig was seen there most days in the week, now at one poor shanty and then at another. And the doctor's wife followed up his medicines, in many places, with broth and gruel, and baby clothes, that were equally gratuitous.

Laura was coming home one day, — a year ago, — after a long holiday ramble with her "particular friend," Susie Franer. They had been as far as Croton woods, and had their hands full of ferns, and wild honeysuckle, and hepatica, gathered beside the brook that Elsie Raymond had christened "Laughing Water." They had to come through Bobtown to get into the village

again, and became, of course, the "centre of observation" to the little rag-tags who paddled about Bobtown at all hours promiscuously.

Half a dozen of them, with bare legs and bonnetless heads, gathered around the young ladies, with a sociable impulse.

"Gimme a flower, missis," said one, that was lugging a baby half as big as herself. "I know who *you* are — you're the doctor's girl."

"And I know who *you* are," retorted Laura. "You're Katie Flinn, that dropped her little brother into the duck pond the other day. What should I give you a flower for?" But she put a bunch of pink honeysuckle into the little brown paw all the same, and Katie giggled her thanks.

"I didn't hurt the baby; I jist ducked him the laste bit; but *that* girl," pointing to a red-headed comrade, "she beats her little brother awful bad, an' pinches him. Don't she, Biddy?"

"No, I don't, no such thing!" protested 'that girl,' indignantly. "Don't you belave her, missis. Katie Flinn tells the *biggest* lies; and here's Biddy O'Brine can prove it. Now, can't ye, Biddy?"

But Biddy declined to testify for either side. She giggled, and stuck her fingers in her mouth,

leaving one to infer, what was very nearly the truth, that there was not much to be said to the credit of either.

"I expect you're both of you just as bad as you can be," said Laura, laughing with her eyes, though she tried to be very severe. "If you tell lies, Katie Flinn, you'll never go to heaven. And if you — what's your name?" to the red-headed girl.

"Maggie M'Carty," in chorus from them all.

"Well, if you pinch your little brother, Maggie M'Carty, I'll tell the doctor of you, now; and he won't come to see you when you get sick."

Maggie showed her white teeth in a saucy laugh. "I ain't goin' to get sick, no time," was her confident answer. "I know somebody that wants the doctor, though."

"Who is it?" asked Laura.

"It's a woman over yonder, in *that* house," pointing to one of the shabbiest of the shanties. "My mother took her somethin' to eat this mornin', 'cause she didn't have nothin', an' she says she's rale sick, too."

"What's the matter with her?"

"*I* do' know," said Maggie; but Katie Flinn put in glibly, —

"It's chills she's got; shakin' ager. My mother said so. An' my mother says she don't do nothin' but cry all the time."

Laura gave Susie a look of quick interest. "What does she cry for?" she asked. "Just because she's sick?"

"'Cause she hain't got nobody to do nothin' for her," answered Katie.

"An' she ain't got nothin' to eat," added Maggie.

"I'll go and see her this very minute," said Laura, promptly. "Susie, are you afraid? Will your mother mind, do you think? Chills aren't catching, you know."

"I guess not," said Susie. "I'll risk it, any way."

"Come on, then," said Laura, full of eagerness. "If it's true what these little monkeys say, somebody ought to see to her, you know. I wonder if papa has heard anything about her?"

"My mother said she was goin' to speak to the doctor, next time she saw him," put in Biddy O'Brine, finding her tongue at last.

"Then papa *doesn't* know," was Laura's conclusion; and, without more ado, she hurried on to the house indicated, the whole body-guard of little paddies following close at her heels. The door opened as they reached the place, and a woman came out that was instantly greeted with a yell from Katie Flinn's big baby.

"Mahmy! mahmy! *mahmy!*" stretching out his fat arms to be taken by his mother. She snatched him up for a minute, and then tumbled him back to Katie indifferently, while she turned to Laura.

"Sure, miss, an' is it the doctor's young lady? I was wishin' this blessid minnit I cud lay eyes on the face uv him, for the poor crather's sake that's a groanin' in it."

"Is she very sick?" asked Laura. "That's what we came for — to see her."

"The Lord bless the purty faces av yez! Come in it, thin, and give her a frindly word, for shure's it's hersilf that wants it bad. Katie Flinn, go right along home, an' don't be afther droppin' that baby. Biddy O'Brine, your mother's waitin' for you, wid a big stick forninst the fince. Be aff wid yez all!"

They scattered, reluctantly, before her out-

stretched arms, the Flinn baby bawling lustily for his "mahmy," and Biddy O'Brine looking rather dejected at the cheerful prospect awaiting her "forninst the fince." Laura and Susie went inside, and saw there, upon her forlorn-looking bed, the poor creature that lay so helpless and uncared-for. Her face was hot with fever, and she moaned with pain as she tried to push away the tangled hair from about it. Her clothing, and that of the bed, with the few bits of furniture in the room, were all of the most poverty-stricken appearance; and the desolate misery pictured in her face filled the tender hearts of the two little girls with the keenest pity.

"Hasn't she any friends at all?" Susie Franer asked. "Where did she come from? what's her name?" And Laura asked, half indignantly, "Why didn't somebody tell my father about her?"

"Faith, an' it's me that mint to spake to him," Mrs. Flinn said. "But Katie was jist afther makin' a drownded kitten uv Johnny, an' all my sinses forsuk me complately. An' that was the last time I laid eyes on the doctor, God bless him for a rale gintleman as he is, an' a kind frind to Bobtown."

"What's her name?" asked Susie again, breaking into Mrs. Flinn's voluble speech.

"Is it her name ye said? Faith, an' it's a quare soundin' name she's got, thin. She called hersilf Gritchin Shiffin *somethin'*. Me tongue can't ketch it at all, at all."

"Gretchen Scheiffendecker," moaned the sick woman from her bed, and Mrs. Flinn rattled on.

"O, yis, and that same it is. It comes asy to her, but me tongue ain't used to the likes of it, ye see, miss. It's outlandish, but she's a dacent body, the poor crather, an' a stiddy, hard worker till her trouble tuk her. As I told me husband, 'Pat,' sez I, 'she works aquil to a horse,' sez I, an' 'Biddy,' sez he, 'what a blessin' it ud be if she'd tache yersilf the thrick of it!' But that was jist for the sake of tazin', as I told him. 'Pat,' sez I, 'you've no raysin' to complain,' sez I. 'Nor I don't,' sez he, 'for I wouldn't be so onfeelin' as to tache an' old dog new thricks,' sez he."

Laura and Susie exchanged glances as the flow of words streamed on. "Did you ever hear such a tongue?" said Susie's eyes. "No, I never did!" answered Laura's. And they began to despair of ever getting any real information about

the sick woman. Mrs. Flinn dearly loved the music of her own voice, and this was such an opportunity that she could not refrain from improving it. However, it came out by and by, in connection with a good many "Pat, sez I's," and "Biddy, sez he's," that the Scheiffendecker woman had "tramped" there, with her husband, in search of work, about six months before. The man had got something to do at the aqueduct, and the woman had worked anywhere, and at anything she could find to do: washing and ironing, house cleaning, digging in the fields, hay making — she never refused anything. And so for a while they had got on comfortably, until all at once the man took to drinking, went on a spree, lost his place, and finally cleared off altogether one day, leaving his wife to shift for herself.

"He made a pretinse of goin' to New York to find work," said Mrs. Flinn, "an' he chated the poor thing into belavin' that he'd come back to fetch her. But he's niver come, nor niver mint to, as I said to Pat. 'Pat,' sez I, —"

"Well," interrupted Laura, hastily, dreading another avalanche of Pat, "I shall go right home, and tell papa; and he'll come and see her to-

morrow, and mamma, too. She shan't be left to suffer."

"The blessin's of the Lord upon you!" Mrs. Flinn exclaimed, piously. "It was only yisterday I was sayin' to Pat, 'Pat,' sez I—"

"Good by, Mrs. Scheiffendecker," said Laura, unceremoniously. "You keep a good heart now, and don't fret. When you see my mother tomorrow, you'll feel better right away. And my father's a doctor, too; he'll have you all right again in no time."

She laid her little plump, cool hand on Mrs. Scheiffendecker's hard and homely one, all hot with fever. It was clasped in a convulsive sort of way, and drawn up to the poor parched lips. "Such a kiss!" Laura said afterwards. "It fairly burned my hand." But she understood the poor creature's grateful impulse, and it filled her heart with active pity.

"I want to do something for that woman," she said to Susie, as they hurried home together, walking fast to overtake the sunset. "I don't know what I *can* do, I'm sure; but I feel to want it, as old Miss Hetty says."

"I should like to do something for Mrs. Flinn," said Susie, comically. "Your father isn't the

sort of doctor that cuts off people's legs and arms, and things — is he?"

"No, indeed; what do you mean?" asked Laura, looking surprised.

"If he could only persuade Mrs. Flinn to let him take an inch or two off her tongue!" said Susie.

"What a goose!" Laura exclaimed. And so they both went home in a merry mood, in spite of the poor Scheiffendecker.

But her case was duly presented to the powers at home; and when the doctor started on his rounds the next morning, Mrs. Guilford went with him; and a nice little basket of nourishing food, and other sick-room necessities, went with her. When Laura came home from school, she found her mother in the nursery, busily stitching up a very small night-gown. Three or four little white rolls, that looked as if they might be more night-gowns, cut out for making, lay in her work-basket, with some breadths of old flannel, ripped out of a petticoat that Laura had used up. She looked at them curiously.

"Are you making night-gowns for Pinkie Bluebell, mamma?" she asked in all seriousness; the garments bearing more proportion to the size

of Flossy's big doll than to the dimensions of baby Archie.

"My dear, they are for a live doll," was Mrs. Guilford's answer. "Your friend, Gretchen Scheiffendecker, has a little daughter."

"Why, I didn't see it," exclaimed Laura, surprised. "And I asked Mrs. Flinn if she had any children, too."

"What did Mrs. Flinn say?"

"O, what *didn't* she say?" cried Laura, laughing. "Such a gabble of 'Pat, sez I,' and 'Biddy, sez he!' But I understood her that there weren't any children at all."

"I found one this morning, at all events," said Mrs. Guilford, smiling. "It was a little star-baby, I suppose, that came down in the night on a bridge of moonbeams. And being mild weather up there, the grown-up stars didn't think it necessary to send any clothes with it. But down here, you know, the wind changes. So I've been cutting up some of your old night-gowns and petticoats for present needs. Would you like to help me make them?"

"Mamma," said Laura, solemnly, taking up one of the little white rolls, and spreading out the pieces before her, "I fully believe all that is

nonsense. In the first place, there wasn't any moon at all last night."

"O," Mrs. Guilford exclaimed, with the most candid air, "I forgot that. Well, perhaps the stars linked themselves into a golden chain to let her down."

"In the next place," pursued Laura, scornfully indifferent to this hypothesis, "there never was a star-baby. Any way, they wouldn't be such little geese as to come down from a beautiful blue sky to live in Bobtown."

"Ah, but poor Mrs. Scheiffendecker," remonstrated her mother, "why shouldn't she have the comfort of a dear little baby, if she does live in Bobtown?"

There was no answering this argument; so Laura brought her work-box, and sat down to help her mother make the night-gowns. The case was urgent, for the poor little "star-baby" had found its way to a desolate and destitute home. There were none of the soft embroidered flannels, the dainty tucked slips, the bewitching little socks, and ruffled shirts, that await the coming of most babies, prepared for the small Scheiffendecker. It lay, just now, cuddled up in an old quilt that belonged to Mrs. Flinn, and had

a wrinkled-up and disconsolate look, as if it didn't think much of its new quarters. That's a look I've observed, however, in other star-babies, even when they were wrapped in white cashmere and swan's down, and lay in a blue satin bassinette. So, perhaps, it doesn't mean anything particular.

Laura's tongue kept pace with her needle, and at least as many words as stitches went to the making-up of *her* night-gown. They were not altogether idle words, either; for out of some of them grew, as the oak in the acorn, the sewing society, which was now widened into "Ambo."

"I'll tell you what, mamma," was the beginning, "Susie Franer and I ought to be doing this work, not you. *We* found that Gretchen, you know."

"You are doing your share," said Mrs. Guilford.

"Susie would be willing to help, too, I know. Suppose you give it all up to us, you have so many other things to attend to, always."

"But the baby is naked, meanwhile, and you and Susie are at school, with lessons, and practice-hours to consider. I'm afraid the child

would suffer, with the best intentions on your part."

"No, we could have a bee," Laura persisted. "I know two or three girls that would help, besides Susie. And, let's see — to-morrow's Friday, next day's Saturday. I could ask Lizzie Walker, and Elsie, and Alice to come here Saturday afternoon; Gertie Fisher, too, and Georgie White, I guess they'd all come. And just think, what a lot of sewing — *easy* sewing like this — we could do amongst us!"

Mrs. Guilford pondered the matter. To have Laura's bee implied the trouble for herself of a tea-party for the flock, and the preparation and general direction of all the work. It would really be easier to make the baby-clothes herself, with such assistance as Laura was inclined to render. On the other hand, there was something in the fact of association for a good purpose; it might be made beneficial in various ways, and lead to more results than one.

So it ended in Laura's having permission to ask the girls, who all gave a willing consent; and there was a merry, busy afternoon at the brown cottage, with the jolliest little tea-party imaginable to wind it up. Two night-gowns, two flan-

nel pinners, two slips, and a sacque, were put together, with the aid of much advice and "fixing" from Mrs. Guilford. To say that they were not puckered and cobbled considerably, or that the stitches were not distinctly visible to the naked eye, — at almost any distance, — would be an evasion of the truth of which I decline to be guilty. But the Gretchen woman, as Flossy called her, was no judge of needle-work, and what did the star-baby care about it?

The sewing bee led to results, helped along a little by Mrs. Guilford. The garments that they had made were of course not enough, except for immediate use, and Laura said it was a pity to stop, when they had begun so well, until they had given the child a wardrobe. So they promised to come another Saturday afternoon; and at Elsie Raymond's suggestion, they each brought a donation, in the shape of some cast-off garment of their own. Elsie — always thoughtful — brought hers ready prepared for sewing; Alice brought half a dozen articles, all too good to cut up for such uses; the other contributions were more or less serviceable, but all in the rough; and Mrs. Guilford had to plan, cut out, and arrange for everybody.

But the girls enjoyed the work, and the sense of doing good by it; and it was pleasant to be all together, laughing and chattering like so many wrens while they sewed, to say nothing of the festive time they were sure to have at tea, with such appetites for the dainty biscuit, and cake, and fruit, such a cheerful, merry welcome from the doctor, and Mrs. Guilford *always* so bright and cordial.

Nobody objected to coming a third Saturday, to finish up things, and by that time Laura's busy little brain had conceived the idea of turning her sewing bees into a regular association. She consulted with her mother, who approved the idea, and suggested practical methods of carrying it out. So on the third meeting the new society was organized by unanimous consent, and a plan and by-laws drawn up with the utmost formality.

Laura was chosen president, Susie vice-president, Elsie secretary, and Gertie treasurer. The rest were to make themselves useful according to opportunity, and they were all to be a committee of supplies, for enlisting new members, and collecting contributions. They were to meet once a week, at each other's houses, taking it in regular turn; and their work, at first, was to be the alter-

ing and making over of second-hand clothes, to be given away wherever it was agreed by the society. Afterwards, when they had improved a little, they were to take in sewing, after the fashion of older societies, and earn money, which they would dispense in charity, according to general consent. Fines for non-attendance not to exceed five cents; fines for unladylike behavior, bad grammar, and the use of slang words, one penny. Contributions from the members unsolicited, and entirely optional; smallest favors thankfully received from the public at large!

They had a merry time getting up "their constitution," and Mrs. Guilford entered into all the fun with them, at the same time that she made them feel they were undertaking something of importance. It was not sure to be always an amusement; it would sometimes be a hinderance to other pleasures, and, when the novelty was over, it would very likely be felt occasionally as a task and a weariness, she told them. They must understand in the beginning all the responsibilities, and make up their minds fully to accept all the consequences; else it would be better not to undertake the thing at all. She said they might, if they chose, make their meeting together

for this purpose a real benefit — to themselves as well as to the poor people they meant to help. And when Gertie Fisher — who had an inquiring mind, and always wanted to know the practical how and why of everything — asked what she meant, she gave them a nice little lecture on mutual improvement, which I shan't spoil by trying to repeat. The argument of her discourse was the opportunity afforded for gain in self-control, and mutual courtesies and consideration, since they were subject to no authority but their own. She touched upon the comprehensive meaning of the word *charity*, which they proposed to exemplify. It was to make garments for the poor, and it was also to think no evil of one another, to suffer long and be kind, not to vaunt itself and be puffed up, or easily provoked, and so on, and so on.

It was a shrewd little lecture, adapted to the idiosyncrasies of her audience. She knew Laura's love of managing and directing things, Alice's quick temper, Susie's disposition to be jealous, and Georgie's positive way of expressing opinion. Lizzie and Gertie had their own little crotchets, too, which Mrs. Guilford's watchful eyes had taken note of; and so they all — even to Elsie

herself, though the lecture was never meant for her — found a cap to fit, and put it on gracefully. Nobody was ever vexed with Mrs. Guilford's plain speaking; her look and smile said always, so irresistibly, "It is because I love you, my dear!"

CHAPTER IV.

VIOLET'S HANDKERCHIEF.

THE little society flourished apace from this beginning. The original seven doubled and trebled itself in a short time, and they were the best girls of the village and the neighborhood who swelled its ranks. Carrie Haven and Lucy Holbrook, May Barnard and Jennie Cobb, were among the first recruits; Annie Joline, and Nellie Bacon, and Fannie Boorman followed soon after; and Gussie Pike would have accepted the very slightest invitation to become a member. But nobody gave her one, as it happened, in spite of many hints, and more open advances as well. Since Maddie Shaw had left the school, there was nobody upon whom Gussie could fasten herself; and when Elsie Raymond, out of her abundant charity, suggested her name once for a new member, it was unanimously voted down.

"We don't want anybody here to set us all

by the ears," said Laura. And Alice declared, flatly, that Elsie ought to be ashamed of herself for thinking of such a thing.

"I didn't think of it myself," was Elsie's answer; "and to tell the honest truth, I don't suppose Gussie would help us much. But then she asked me, and how could I refuse?"

"Easy enough," retorted Alice. "Tell her you'd see her in 'Ballyhang' first."

"Softly, Alice!" Gertie Fisher held up a warning finger. "You'll get a fine for slang, or something."

"Is that slang? Well, I thought it was geography," said Alice, ridiculously. So they all laughed, and Gussie was "left out in the cold" — which, if one must tell the truth, was no more than she deserved. For it was not any good motive that made her wish to get into the circle. It was chiefly the opportunity for gossip, the chance of going to houses where she was never asked otherwise, and a love of eating, which was one of Gussie's prominent characteristics. She envied the girls when she heard them talking of the nice little suppers with which the society meetings were wound up. Her mouth watered after the strawberries and cream, the

jelly-cake and chocolate, the cold chicken and muffins, the sweetmeats and custards, which were duly provided by indulgent mammas. She resented having no share in them, but she did not ask herself, with any honest conviction, the reason why "this was thus." If she had, her conscience might have answered, —

"Because you have never taken pains to win the liking and respect of your companions; because you have found your element in mischief-making, backbiting, and talebearing; because you are selfish, greedy, and untruthful; because you have laughed at reproof, and despised the advice of those who tried to influence you to better things; in a word, because you have chosen the bad instead of the good, and so, naturally, you are avoided by those who prefer what is 'lovely, and pure, and of good report.'"

It would have been "a verdict in accordance with the facts" — more's the pity! but it would have been also the best basis of reform, if ever Gussie and her conscience *had* talked together after this wise. Unfortunately, they never did, and Gussie continued to tread her little round of petty wickedness unabashed and unrepenting.

But the sewing society, at least, was not stirred up by her "evil communications."

It had its little ups and downs in other directions, in spite of Mrs. Guilford's good advice. Some of the members got vexed, and resigned; then got over it, and came back again. Some were indolent, and came more for the fun than the work; some were industrious, and very self-righteous and "superior" in consequence. Human nature is pretty much alike all the world over; the meeting together for a good purpose does not keep petty jealousies and disagreements out of grown-up societies, and why should it do more for the younger branches?

On the whole, however, there was a great deal more harmony than discord, all things considered; and the first annual report of the secretary — written out in Elsie's most finished style — was a satisfactory evidence that the society had accomplished something.

Three babies, besides the "star-baby" *par excellence*, had been provided with wardrobes entire; and each of the mothers had been presented with two or three welcome articles of clothing. Janie Russell had had a new dress, and two little Bobtown waifs had been induced

to come to Sunday school by reason of a decent outfit from the society. Besides all this, there had been quite a number of little fancy articles made up at odd times with reference to the inevitable Fair, that, by some condition of their being, always crops out of these feminine associations.

Its first suggestion had come from little Olive, who had volunteered contributions from her inexhaustible treasure-box; and the idea being taken up, one thing led to another, until the fair grew a fact *in esse*, and the society began to count up its resources in good earnest, to make it a brilliant *af*-fair. It was Lizzie Walker's proposition that they should call in their brothers' help. The society concluded that it might be a good thing; and we have seen how the invitation was extended to one of the "honorary members." The rest — a dozen or more merry school-boys, ready for fun in any shape — took it up willingly. There was a meeting, at which all the members, old and new, appeared in force at the brown cottage; and the boys were instructed in the duties and services that were expected of them. They laughed at the badges, and shouted over the Latin, and behaved as boys

generally behave, with a great indifference to law and order. But they consented — and that was the main point — to give all the help they could; and a day was agreed upon for the picnic in Dale Woods to collect material for their rustic work. Mrs. Guilford wound up the proceedings by sending in a well-filled tray of cake and lemonade, and then the meeting adjourned in mutual satisfaction — to meet again on the coming Saturday and march in procession down to Dale Woods.

The skies were watched anxiously for the rest of the week, and the bright sunshine that streamed across the hills Saturday morning was reflected in Laura's face, as she bustled about in her picnic preparations. Sydney had been up betimes, and gathered a basket of dewy-ripe strawberries; and Laura filled another with cake and buttered biscuit in liberal quantities. By nine o'clock the first comers arrived, and pretty soon the piazza was full of boys and girls and lunch-baskets, and the whole place astir with a merry bustle and confusion. The badges were all ready for the occasion, — a gay blue ribbon with a very large letter A embroidered in yellow, — and these had to be pinned on, with plenty of laughing

and nonsense of course. Then the procession must be formed, two by two, and the baskets divided amongst the boys, with special charges about the manner of carrying certain delicate articles; and at last they all marched off in merry humor, the blue badges conspicuous, and the boys whistling "Captain Jinks" by way of marching-music.

"What have we got to do?" was the first question when they reached the woods and broke ranks in the cool shadow of the rustling hemlocks and beeches.

"Rest ourselves, and enjoy the beauties of nature," said Sydney, promptly, stretching himself at length on a tempting green bank. "That's the first thing to be done."

And the pleasant ripple of the water close by, the cool whispering wind, and the lovely wavering shadows, seemed to invite them to take his lazy advice. So they all sat down for a while — some finding seats on the mossy rocks that crop up everywhere in Dale Woods; some spreading themselves on the dried leaves of last year's dropping; some making spring seats by bending down the slender young saplings. The girls were rather tired with the long walk through

the June sunshine, and the rest and coolness were refreshing to everybody. Besides, it was an opportunity to settle the plan of the day's operations, and decide the work that each one could do best.

"Did you ever see picture-frames made of oat straws?" asked Charlie Cox. "They are ever so pretty for little card-pictures, — photographs and things, — and I know how to make 'em."

"But oat straws don't grow in the woods," objected his sister Nannie. "What's the use of talking about them now?"

"O, I just happened to think of them. Other things grow in the woods that will make frames too; fir cones are nice, and acorns, and different kinds of twigs. I guess I'll devote myself to the fancy-frame business. What do you say, Mr. President?"

"All right," answered Laura. "Sydney's going to make boats, and I want somebody to make jack-straws."

"Frank can do that," said Gertie Fisher. "He whittled a set for me when we had the measles. It was the only thing that kept me alive, watching him."

"What a whopper!" exclaimed Frank. "You

kept alive on chicken-broth and jelly, and crossness."

"Nice diet," laughed Laura; "especially the last."

"Wouldn't anybody be cross with the measles?" asked Gertie, defiantly. "I'd just like to know!"

"Of course they would — anybody that wasn't a goose. About the jack-straws, though; they ought to have fancy heads, you know — tomahawks, and arrows, and crosslets —"

Frank nodded complacently.

"*I* know," he said, with the air of being quite equal to any amount of fancy heads.

So the jack-straws were assigned to him, and Harry Walker volunteered to make nice little wooden boxes for them. Tom Franer said he could make paper-knives out of white pine; and Joe Barnard had *decalcomania* materials, and offered to decorate boxes, knives, and everything in the highest style of that high art. Will Haviland offered to contribute marble paper-weights; he had a friend in the marble-works, who would give him the odd pieces of marble, and get them cut and polished for a trifling cost. Sam Haven promised a set of hanging book-shelves, and

Chester Boorman some corner brackets; while Jack Holbrook declared that he was like his name, a Jack of all trades, and didn't mean to confine himself to anything in particular, but do wonders in a general way.

They spent a pleasant hour in discussing these various matters, and then they scattered about the woods to collect such material as might be available for their purposes. The girls wanted ferns, and wild flowers, mosses, and lichen, and grasses; the boys wanted wood of different sorts for their whittling affairs, and pebbles and rock from the brook for a fresh water aquarium, which two or three of them had ambitiously undertaken to accomplish.

A bushel or two of miscellaneous matter was gathered together in a short time, and then it had to be prepared for transportation; the ferns and leaves pressed between folded newspapers, the mosses packed in a basket, the grasses tied up for drying, the rough branches whittled into portable bundles. By the time this was done, everybody agreed that lunch was the next thing to be considered.

Sydney whistled, "Molly, put the kettle on," as he began to gather up dry twigs and leaves to

make a fire, and the girls ran away to unpack their dishes. Nobody really cared about tea; but it was gypsy-like to make a pretence of cooking something, and there was a fireplace ready made, which it would be a shame not to use. This was a hollow tree, which had been burned out close to the ground by some picnic party; the ashes of their fire still remained, and the cross-piece upon which they had suspended their kettle. A little tin pail soon hung there again, and there was a merry "crackling of thorns" under it in a few minutes. The thin, blue smoke curled in and out in fairy-like wreaths, and vivid little tongues of flame shot to and fro, till they leaped up all together in one hot, bright blaze, that soon made the water boil.

"Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and caldron bubble,"

quoted Sydney, with a melodramatic gesture. "Bring on your herbs now;

'Round about the caldron go,
And in your—'"

"Sydney, be still! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Laura interrupted before he could

finish the line. "We won't have any witches' broth here, if *you* please."

"Be still yourself. I was only going to say, 'In your prime old Java throw.' What's *that* to be ashamed of?"

"Who ever heard of prime old Java *tea!*" shouted Frank Fisher. "If I was going to make a parody, I'd do better than that, old fellow. Say, *in your herb celestial throw* — and here the crinkly tea leaves go!" suiting the action to the word by emptying the whole paper of tea, that Gertie had just laid down, into the boiling water.

Gertie made a spring at him. "O, *Frank!* that's no way to make tea. It ought to be *steeped*, and have the water poured on. Did anybody ever see such a stupid trick?"

"We honorary fellows are not wanted here; that's plain," said Frank, shrugging his shoulders. "Come, Syd, let's make ourselves useful somewhere else."

"You'd better," snapped Gertie. "Go and bring up the lemonade, and don't make any mischief with *that*. Now mind."

They ran off, laughing, to obey her. The lemonade, made at home, had been put in a covered

pail, and intrusted to Frank, who volunteered to find a cool place for it. Anywhere in the brook would have been cool enough; but he thought he was doing a clever thing when he took the pail out into the middle of the stream, and wedged it down between some rocks, over which the water foamed and rushed in a particularly inviting manner.

"It's sure to keep cool there," had been his complacent thought; and he did not grudge the wet shoes it had cost him to get out to the rocks. No misgiving crossed his mind as he went now to fetch it back; but his face grew very blank as he reached the bank of the brook opposite the spot, and saw no sign of the pail.

"What's the matter?" asked Sydney at his sudden ejaculation. "Don't tell me the lemonade has come to grief!"

"Well, it has, then, and nothing shorter." Frank's face had a ludicrous dismay in it, as he stood staring at the treacherous rocks, and the water whirling and tumbling over them with a rapid, ceaseless tumult.

"Did you put it out there?" shouted Sydney. "O, good gracious!" And he burst into a derisive laugh, which, under the circumstances, was

most exasperating. Frank turned upon him angrily.

"Why *shouldn't* I put it there? It's the coolest place, and the safest place — if nobody meddled with it. *You've* been at it, I do believe! It's just like you to play a trick on a fellow."

"Upon my word and honor, Frank," — Sydney stopped laughing, and spoke with such sincerity that there was no doubting him, — "I've never so much as seen it. I only know there's too much water power out in those rapids. Most anything would be washed away. You'll find the pail farther down the stream, I guess, and not much lemonade in it, either."

"May be somebody else got it before we came," said Frank, with a forlorn hope. And they ran up into the woods again to make inquiries. But no one had thought about it since it was delivered up to Frank, hours ago; and a great hue and cry was set up at its disappearance. The boys ridiculed him, the girls lamented, and Gertie felt called upon to be severely sarcastic.

"You're a nice boy to bring on a picnic, *real* nice — now aren't you?" she asked, in a withering way. "First you spoil the tea, and then you

lose the lemonade; and what are we going to do without it? Just tell me."

"Dry up!" said Frank, disrespectfully, meaning it as a command, and not as an answer to her question.

"Slang expressions!" cried Susie Franer. "Fine, one penny, Mr. Frank Fisher, and your sister is the treasurer."

"Go to Guinea, and collect it," Frank retorted, half laughing, half vexed, as he broke away from them to make another search farther down the stream.

Sydney and Charlie Cox had gone ahead of him, and a shout from the bushes, in the marshy ground below, announced that something had been discovered. Frank dashed down just in time to meet Sydney coming up with the tin pail in his hand — *upside down*. Charlie Cox had the cover, also inverted, and two or three squeezed lemons lay in it as in a dish. Explanation was unnecessary, and comment was superfluous. The story told itself, and Frank had to own up, with as good a grace as possible, that he ought to have known better. He felt so chagrined, and requested everybody in such a resigned tone of voice, to "pitch in, and blow him up for a reg-

ular dummy; he hadn't a word to say," that everybody grew magnanimous immediately, and declared there was no harm done. What did anybody want of lemonade? Wasn't there water? a whole roaring brook full! and tea by the quart; and whoever wasn't satisfied with such richness —

"Well, he don't deserve to be an honorary Sambo," said Sydney, "capping the climax;" and so the lemonade question was settled, and nobody's appetite was spoiled. Neither was the tea, after all, if the way the cups were emptied was any sign. Buttered biscuits and sandwiches disappeared as rapidly; cake and strawberries followed suit; and by the time "Ambo" had lunched, the fragments of the feast were "nothing to nobody."

"What shall we do next?" asked May Barnard; and a chorus of propositions made answer.

"Let's have a dance," said Susie Franer; "it's just the place for a Virginia reel."

"Let's play Copenhagen," said Jack Holbrook; "such fun to chase the girls for kisses round these trees!"

"Don't you see us letting you?" asked Alice

Haviland, with a toss of her curls. "Kissing games are not allowed in *this* society, let me tell you."

"Let's tell stories," Carrie Haven proposed. "That's the nicest thing to do, and Elsie can begin."

"Elsie begs to be excused," — very promptly.

"Let's take a nap, *I* say," — from Sydney Guilford, with a lazy yawn. "I feel just like it."

"And *I* say — let's wash the dishes!" Laura suggested, practically. "Here's warm water and lots of towels, and we'll make Sydney kindle the fire again to keep him awake."

Her unexpected proposition met with unanimous approval. Washing dishes was an operation that possessed the charm of novelty to most of the party, and it was set about at once, with more zeal than discretion. Elsie Raymond, who had, as we know, experience in such matters, looked on with dismay at the reckless handling of delicate crockery, and interposed quietly a suggestion here and there that saved several articles from total ruin. It was owing to her altogether that a glass cream-jug of Mrs. Haviland's was not split with boiling water, and a fine damask napkin was rescued from service in wiping

out the unwashed strawberry plates. A few dishes were cracked, and a cup and saucer "damaged hopelessly," as Frank Fisher said, in spite of her efforts. But these were trifles that did not disturb the general serenity.

Sydney strolled off while this housewifery was going on. "Too many cooks spoil the broth," he said, to excuse his laziness. "I guess I'll go over into the cemetery, and walk around amongst the old tombstones."

The cemetery lay beyond the brook that skirted Dale Woods. Its white tombstones could be seen in the distance, through opening vistas of the woodland, and its bowery paths went up hill and down dale, winding about another branch of the same stream, and leading one into many a lovely nook. The air was sweet with roses, blooming ungathered in the burial plots, and the grassy slope of the hill was golden with buttercups. Everything looked peaceful and beautiful in the still, bright sunshine; and Sydney — who was thoughtful when he chose to be — enjoyed the sense of loneliness, and the half sad, half sweet fancies that came to him as he wandered amongst these silent graves.

There was one that had been made on a terrace above the path. Two or three marble steps led up to a circular plot that was enclosed with a hedge of orange trees; and inside was just one little grave, — a baby's, — with a white cross at its head. The inscription was only, "*Our Little Heart's Ease*," and the little green mound was covered with purple pansies, scattered there by some loving hand not many hours before; for the flowers were fresh and unfaded still.

Sydney was too much like his mother not to be touched by anything so simple and tender. He stopped with involuntary admiration, and leaned over the hedge to look at the cross, the pansies, the dear little grave — picturing to himself the innocent baby face that lay so still beneath them. Other people had done the same thing that day, as he discovered presently. Something white fluttered under the hedge as he went down the steps again, and, stooping to pick it up, he found a dainty little handkerchief, fine as a cobweb, and pure as a snow-flake, with a delicate lace border around the edge, and in one corner an embroidered name.

Spelling this out, letter by letter, — for Sydney

was not very skilful in deciphering the alphabetical ornaments that ladies are fond of,—he finally made it out to be "*Violet*," which was very pretty, and in one way descriptive; for a faint fragrance suggestive of the flower (or Lubin's extract) floated about it, as if to justify the name; but it did not help one to a definite idea of the owner of the handkerchief.

"Violet! Violet! I never knew anybody that was named Violet," Sydney said to himself, puzzling over it. "Why don't people write their names on their handkerchiefs in good English, and black ink, instead of working all these flowery flummeries, that don't tell anything at all? *I* don't know what to do with the thing. I've a great mind to leave it where I found it."

But on second thought he concluded to carry it over the brook with him, and take feminine advice as to the chances of returning it to its owner. Some of the girls might know who "Violet" was, perhaps. So he put the handkerchief in his pocket, and made his way back to the picnic party, who had finished their "kitchen work," as he contemptuously called the dish washing, and were playing, with shouts of

merriment, the ridiculous game of "Bird, Beast, and Fish."

Sydney broke it up by displaying his "find," and the girls flocked around to wonder at and admire the pretty little *mouchoir*. They informed him that the lace was "*real* Valenciennes," and the embroidery "French;" but who "Violet" was, or where she might be found, nobody was able to tell. It wasn't any one who belonged in Englewood; they were all sure of that.

"But it might be one of the summer boarders, that come up here every year," May Barnard suggested.

And as this was a very probable supposition,— Englewood being a popular place of summer resort, — it was decided that it was useless to make inquiries for the unknown owner.

"I shall advertise it in the post-office," Sydney said, laughingly; "and if Violet doesn't come forward to prove property and pay expenses, then I'll tell you what'll I do with it."

"Give it to me, of course," said Laura, merrily.

"Not a bit of it. I'll 'turn to the east, and

turn to the west, and give it to the pretty girl that I love best.'"

But who that "pretty girl" was he refused to tell; perhaps for the reason that he didn't know himself.

CHAPTER V.

VIOLET'S GRANDFATHER.

AT this very time, while the boys and girls in Dale Woods were talking about Violet's handkerchief, an old gentleman was sitting at a window, a mile or two away, watching impatiently for Violet herself. It was the dinner hour at the boarding-house, and everybody else had gone down; but Colonel Schuyler was a fastidious old gentleman, very punctilious in his notions of etiquette, and he would never go to the table until his granddaughter was ready to accompany him.

So he sat at the parlor-window all alone, and fretted and fidgeted as he heard the rattle of knives and forks, and the cheerful hum of voices in the next room, and thought of the cold dinner that he was likely to eat, and which he did not relish in anticipation. He liked his comfort in most things, and was particular about his din-

ner. Anything that interfered with that was apt to ruffle his temper, which was not like "the bosom of a lake on a summer noon" at any time.

Fortunately for his peace of mind, he had not long to wait. The gallop of hoofs in the distance made his face brighten presently, and leaning out of the window, he saw a glimpse of blue fluttering amongst the trees. Next minute a little shaggy Shetland pony came dashing through the open gate, a long, blue riding-habit streaming over the saddle, and a mass of lovely golden hair, blown back from the bright, flushed face of its wearer, flying loose in the breeze.

Colonel Schuyler hastened out to help her dismount; but the young girl gathered up her habit, and sprang off lightly, as one accustomed to it.

"I have kept you waiting—haven't I, grandpa? Am I ever so late?" she exclaimed, eagerly, as she ran up to him. "Don't scold, though! I've had such a lovely morning, and found so many beautiful places! I think this country all about here is *perfectly charming*."

"And I think my dinner will be perfectly charming, when I get it," growled the colonel.

"Do you know the bell rang all of ten minutes ago?"

"If you only wouldn't wait for me —" Violet began; but he interrupted her.

"Never mind about that. Fly up stairs and get your habit off."

And Violet flew, coming back again in an incredibly short time, with her floating hair tamed down, her peachy cheeks more blooming than ever, after the hasty dash of cold water, and a short blue frock in place of the riding-skirt. Everybody looked up as they came into the dining-room together, and more than one admiring glance rested on the graceful little figure, escorted so ceremoniously by the white-headed old gentleman. Violet was quite unconscious of anybody's notice. She was little more than a child in years, and perfectly child-like in disposition, though she had a dainty ease and dignity of manner that proved her well-bred association.

She kept on — in a low tone, for her grandfather's ear only — with the history of her morning's adventures, while the colonel sipped his soup: she only played with her spoon.

"I have been into the woods, grandpapa, and to the cemetery close by," she said. "There's

such a brook — all rocks and waterfalls — and so many wild flowers growing everywhere! I gathered them till I didn't know what to do with them, and then they withered, and I had to throw them away."

"Most sensible thing you could do," said the colonel. "What do you want with the weeds?"

"O, they are beautiful. And another time I mean to take a basket, and gather moss, and keep them fresh. I saw some girls and boys in the woods to-day, — a whole party of them, — and they were pressing ferns and wild flowers in newspapers."

"Big business. I suppose you joined the party?"

"No, of course not;" with a silvery little laugh. "But I wanted to, dreadfully, grandpapa — they seemed to be enjoying themselves so much, and some of the girls were so pretty and lady-like."

"How about the boys?" laughed the colonel.

"O, they were nice, too. They were all dressed in a sort of uniform, and had bits of bright blue ribbon pinned on their jackets. The girls had the same, every one of them. It was some sort of badge, I think."

"A Sunday-school picnic," suggested her grandfather.

"No, it was not like a Sunday school at all," Violet objected. "There were no teachers or grown people — only boys and girls. I did not get close enough to hear what they talked about. I was afraid they would see me, you know; but I couldn't help peeping at them behind the trees, they looked so pretty and merry; and I was curious to see what they were doing. It was very rude, I suppose," she added, apologetically; "but I was only admiring them, and envying them just a little."

"It's a pity you should have to do that," said her grandfather, quietly.

Violet's face flushed quickly. "I only meant just for the time," she answered, hastily. "There were so many of them, and I felt lonely for a minute. I don't envy anybody in earnest, grandpapa, you know."

"I hope you have no reason to," he said, in the same tone. "Most people would think *you* were the one to be envied. What did you do with Tam O'Shanter while you were playing Peeping Tom?"

"What a name to call me, grandpapa!"

Violet looked up with a cloud in her blue eyes, but it melted into sunshine as she met his smile. "You are only teasing me," she said, with a pretty little pout. "It *wasn't* any harm to look at the picnic — now was it, really?"

"Not much," he owned, smilingly; and she went on, relieved, to explain that she had tied Tam O'Shanter — the pony — to a tree in the cemetery, while his mistress had gone about on a voyage of discovery. There was a gully, with steep sides, and a rivulet rippling over the stony bottom, which separated the woods from the cemetery road. Violet had gathered up her habit, and scrambled over this gully, then followed the up-hill, winding path wherever it led, till she came, unawares, upon the picnic party which had so attracted her fancy. It was odd enough that none of the restless little crowd had caught a glimpse of her; but they were all busy at that time, and she had kept herself hidden behind the bushes for the minute or two that she stopped to watch them. Then she had slipped back again, quietly, in the same way, and amused herself with wandering in the picturesque grounds of the cemetery, reading the epitaphs, and gathering ferns by the brook-side, until the

morning slipped away, and she discovered that she would have to gallop fast to overtake the dinner hour.

"Which you didn't overtake, after all," said her grandfather. "The idea of being so fascinated with a graveyard as to forget all about your dinner! I dare say you picked out the spot where you wish to be buried, and composed a romantic epitaph, full of moonshine and lilies."

"No, indeed, I didn't," Violet returned, gayly. "I don't care about being buried just now, if you please; the world is too beautiful to leave so soon. There were graves there that would have fitted me, though," she added, softly. "One tombstone had my very birthday on it, and one had my name. But that was a dear little baby's grave. I couldn't help crying over it."

"I hope you were well supplied with handkerchiefs," said Colonel Schuyler, comically; and Violet laughed.

"No, I only had one, and I lost that," she answered. "Whatever I did with it I can't imagine; but it slipped away from me, and I was provoked about it, I can tell you."

"It must have been a serious loss, considering the tears."

"It was one of my prettiest handkerchiefs," returned Violet, practically. "And you gave it to me, besides. That was what provoked me."

"Perhaps, by industry and economy, I can raise the means to give you another," he said, jocosely. And as Violet knew very well that she could have a dozen more of the same kind, if she expressed a wish for them, the little handkerchief was easily forgotten. She had such luxuries in plenty; laces, and ribbons, and trinkets, and pretty fineries of all sorts, had been lavished upon her by her grandfather, to whom she herself was the most precious and beautiful thing in all the world. They were every-day matters to her, and she attached very little importance to them. She had none of Maddy Shaw's vain consciousness, and never imagined that anybody would think more or less of her on account of her dress or possessions.

What she wished for, and sometimes felt inclined to envy others for having, was the companionship of young people. She loved her grandfather dearly, but she could not help feeling lonely at times, and thinking, in a wistful way, how nice it would be to have a brother

or a sister, or *somebody*, — that was young and foolish like herself, — to go everywhere with her, and share all the childish fancies and projects that were too trifling to bother grandpapa about.

Grandpapa had strict notions about many things, and in his opinion there were very few young people who were good enough to associate with his darling. In a general way he would acknowledge, of course, that she was not perfect, and there might be a great many boys and girls who would make suitable companions for her. Violet was not much the better, however, for these hypothetical boys and girls. She was not allowed to visit any young people, and it was only on rare occasions that any had been invited to visit her. She used to wish that she could go to school; but that was not to be thought of. She must be educated at home, according to her grandfather's theories; and he had taken the greatest pains to find the most accomplished governess for her.

Mrs. Weldon was kind and affectionate, as well as cultivated and lady-like. Violet was fond of her, and happy to be her pupil. She loved Mrs. Brown, the good housekeeper, who

had petted her from her babyhood, and Becky Price, the seamstress, who had once been her nurse. She loved her grandfather best of all, and she was not in the least unhappy or discontented amongst these grown-up people. But still, if she had had her wish, there would have been more fun and frolic in the house, and the sound of other children's voices to mingle with her own.

She had watched the party in the woods with such longing eyes! "If grandpapa would only let me get acquainted with some of those nice-looking girls!" had been her wistful thought. "It must be nice to have so many playmates; and they all seem so merry together! I wish I might know them some time."

And she had even singled out the faces that she liked best in the little crowd, and pictured over to herself, afterwards, Elsie, and Carrie, and Alice, and Laura, with a very distinct recollection of their different looks. It was Laura's face, however, that dwelt longest in her fancy, and she found herself more than once, during the day, thinking how pleasant it would be to have her for a friend, and wondering if such a thing

might be one of the possibilities of this new home they were to live in.

She did not speak her thoughts aloud, for Colonel Schuyler never liked to think that she felt lonely, or wished for anybody but himself. He asked her, after dinner, if she was too tired to go over to the house, and see how the workmen were getting on with the repairs and alterations. Violet laughed at the idea of being tired, and they were soon on their way to "the old Van Wyck place," which had now become, by right of purchase, Colonel Schuyler's property, and, as Sydney had told Laura, he was having it thoroughly overhauled to make it ready for his own occupation. The workmen had been busy for a month, during which time Violet and her grandfather had had rooms at the large summer boarding-house, which was conveniently near; and as Mrs. Weldon had taken the opportunity of the general change and unsettlement to make a visit to her relatives, Violet was having a long holiday.

She enjoyed it heartily, and improved it by taking long rides and walks in every possible direction. She spent a great deal of time at the old house, too, which she thought the most

beautiful and picturesque place she had ever seen. The gray stone walls were mantled with ivy, in which a host of birds built their nests; there was a mullioned window, and a stately arch under which the carriages stopped before the front entrance; with wings, and gable-ends, and diamond-paned lattices, and an observatory, from which one could have a clear sweep of the beautiful river from the Palisades to Croton Point.

Inside the house were a great many rooms, some of them very quaint and pretty, some very lofty and fine; with long corridors, and little unexpected passages, leading to queer closets and corners, and unsuspected staircases. Violet thought it was all delightful, and was glad that her grandfather meant to leave all these unchanged. He was having the fine old woodwork polished and restored, the ceilings frescoed, and the paper-hangings renewed. But everything was done in harmony with the old style of the house; and even the new furniture that was ordered had been made to correspond with the general antiquity.

"It will soon be ready for us to come into — won't it, grandpapa?" she asked, as they stood

together by the fine Gothic window in the hall. "All this part of the house is ready for the furniture now — isn't it?"

"Yes, and that will come to-morrow. In about a week we can take up our quarters here. Do you think you will be happy in the old house, Violet?"

"Yes, indeed," said Violet, promptly. "I never saw any place that I liked so well."

She had said the same thing twenty times before, but it was always pleasant to him to hear her say it.

"Come out into the orchard, and let us see if we can find some cherries. Those ox-hearts ought to be ripe after to-day's sun," he said; and Violet tied on her broad-brimmed hat again, and went with him across the lawn, through the garden, and down a sunny slope to the orchard that lay below.

There were many varieties of fruit trees here; apple and quince, plum and pear, and cherry, apricot, peach, and nectarine. A grapery was built at one end, and orange and lemon trees were growing under the glass. There was the promise of plenty of luscious fruit in its season, but the cherries were the only eatable things

just now. Violet sat down on the soft thick grass under the tree, while her grandfather hooked down, with his cane, long branches full of crimson clusters, broke them off, and tossed them into her lap. It was very pleasant to sit there, eating the pretty fruit, with the fresh wind rustling through the leaves, and the birds singing over her head.

"I never saw such cherries in New York, grandpapa; they are as sweet as honey," she said.

"Wait till the black ones are ripe, over there," he answered. "Then you will see cherries that are worth eating. Of course you never had such in New York, for they are always spoiled by the journey. Cherries should be eaten fresh from the tree."

"Are there any peaches in the orchard?" she asked.

"Yes; they are trained against the wall near the grapery. Murphy says there are two or three very choice varieties, and the pears are the finest in the country. Old Van Wyck paid a great deal of attention to his orchard; he did not care so much for his flower garden. You

and Mrs. Weldon will have plenty to do there, Violet."

"I shall like it dearly," said Violet. "I always wanted a garden to take care of. And I mean to have some poultry, too, some chickens, and guinea hens — O! and a peacock! We ought to have a peacock, grandpapa, to strut about the lawn, and spread his elegant tail."

"And keep us awake at night with his screams," laughed her grandfather. "Did you ever hear the noise the creatures make? It's worse than a cat howling."

"Everything makes a noise here," said Violet. "I hear the cows lowing, and the dogs barking, and the owls hooting, and the chickens crowing. Every night I hear something when I wake up. But I don't mind it. I like all the country noises so much better than the city noises."

"We must have a dog, I suppose," said Colonel Schuyler.

"O, yes! a dear little King Charles, to bark at the peacock," said Violet, merrily.

"O, no! a big bull-dog, or mastiff, to bark at the tramps," he retorted.

"The poor tramps!" exclaimed Violet. "Why must they be barked at, I wonder?"

"To keep them from stealing my fruit, prowling about my poultry-yard, and robbing my house, maybe. They will be barked at, and bitten, too, if they are caught trespassing."

"I thought it was the school-boys that stole the fruit," said Violet. "They always do in the story-books. I read one once, where a boy stole five cherries, one night, off a tree, and the five cherry-stones tormented him by turning up continually in the most unexpected places. They obliged him to confess, at last, and I always felt sorry for the poor fellow, to think he only had five cherries for all that trouble!"

Her grandfather laughed.

"The play was hardly worth the candle, — was it? But it was all the better lesson for him, and served him right. I'd punish a boy for stealing five cherries with as good a will as if he had stolen five bushels. The intention to steal is the crime, not the value of the thing stolen. Remember that, missy."

CHAPTER VI.

LAURA'S IDEA.

"THERE is one thing I haven't heard yet," said Sydney. "What are you going to do with the money — supposing there is any — that comes from the fair?"

It was Laura's turn to have the society, and the parlor at the brown cottage was full of busy bees. All the girls were there in force, and a few of the "honoraries" had dropped in, "just to see what was going on, and have a little fun." The fun consisted chiefly in mischief, Charlie Cox being an inveterate "practical joker," and Frank Fisher and Sydney not at all too virtuous to follow his bad example.

The work-baskets were upset "accidentally," and the spools tangled together in wild confusion; the knitting-work, laid down for a moment, lost its needles mysteriously, and the scissors and emery-cushions kept bobbing out of sight just

when they were most particularly wanted. No boy had the slightest idea how it happened, of course, when Carrie Haven's crochet-needle, that she had hunted for five minutes, was found suddenly sticking in her waterfall. And it filled them all three with the most innocent astonishment when Flossie's cat marched in with Lizzie Walker's emery-cushion tied round her neck.

Laura rose, at last, "to a point of order."

"I'll turn all three of you out of the room if you don't behave better. You are worse than magpies, and jackdaws, and monkeys, all together," she scolded, half laughing, half vexed. "Charlie Cox, I'll tell your mother of you the very next time I see her."

"Now, isn't that rough on a fellow?" asked the "honorary," with an appealing look of injured innocence. "I leave it to the assembled *Ambo*, and I hope they'll answer *una voce*, if anybody has seen me do an identical thing?"

"O, no!" said Laura, in a withering way. "Of course not. We don't see you doing anything, but we feel the consequences. Now, what's become of that other shoe, I wonder? It was here two minutes ago, and now it isn't."

"Is it the doll's shoe?" asked Sydney, innocently.

"Yes, it is. Now, Syd, I'm tired of tricks, and I want to finish this doll to-day. Tell me where it is, if you know."

But he didn't know. He only meant to suggest that "if she'd look in the place where it was lost, she'd probably find it." Which was eminently satisfactory, of course.

"Charlie Cox knows where it is; I see it in his eyes," said Alice Haviland.

"O, good gracious! Come and take it out!" he exclaimed, jumping up in a hurry. "Who'd have thought of such a thing! How could it have got there? Does anybody else see it? She sees a doll's shoe sticking in my eye; O, come and take it out before I die!"

He danced about with such a ridiculous pretence of terror, that the boys shouted, and the girls screamed with laughter. Even Laura had to join in the "audible smile," though she was vexed at the nonsense and the hinderance to her work. The missing shoe was not to be found, even after everybody had jumped up, and shaken out their skirts, and peeped under the sofas and chairs, and hunted over all the

possible hiding-places. So Laura sat down again at last, with a resigned expression.

"It is no use looking any longer, and of course it's no use expecting *you* to tell what you did with it. I might as well make another, though I don't believe I can cut another out of this little scrap of morocco," she said, dolefully.

"Was it made out of red morocco?" asked Frank Fisher, with as much simplicity as if he were really asking for information.

Gertie gave him a severe look.

"You know it was, Frank; and it's too bad to tease Laura so. Why don't you tell her where it is, and not let her have all the trouble of making another?"

"I saw," said Frank, with a sly giggle, and a slanting look at Charlie Cox, "*something* red inside the doll's head, where it's hollow, you know; the place where the brains ought to be. *I* didn't put it there."

"*O!*" exclaimed Gertie, vehemently. "Did anybody *ever* —" But language was inadequate. A chorus of indignant outcry from the girls and a shout of fun from the boys finished her sentence. Laura snatched her scissors, and

made a dash at the doll. Rip, rip went the stitches with which the head had been so securely fastened on — a poke up into the region of the brain — a shake — and out dropped, true enough, the poor little red shoe.

Charlie Cox looked on with innocent wonder.

"If that isn't the funniest thing!" he exclaimed. "What *were* you thinking about, Laura, when you did that?"

But it was no use to scold such a monkey, even for his sauciness. Laura was glad to get her shoe back at any cost, and she contented herself with darting an unutterable glance at him before she proceeded to sew on the doll's head again. Whether it was this that subdued him, or whether his mischief had reached its climax, I don't know; but "Ambo" subsided, after this, into a soberer frame. Charlie offered his services to wind worsteds, and that furnished occupation for two pairs of hands — his own and Sydney's. Frank Fisher demanded something to do, also, on the plea that

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do," —

and he couldn't be responsible for consequences

unless somebody set him to work. Susie Franer gave him a box of beads to sort, — the black from the white, the blue from the red and yellow, and so on, — which he found quite enough for his present attention. So everybody was busy at last, and the fair-work made better progress.

Sydney's question started a controversy.

"I think we ought to buy some new books with the money, for the Sunday-school library," said May Barnard.

"Which library?" asked Carrie Haven. "There are Baptists, and Presbyterians, and Church-women in this crowd, and we've all got Sunday schools."

May was rather taken aback.

"Of course I meant our own library," she said. "We are more Episcopalians than anything else."

"It isn't fair to leave the rest of us out in the cold, though — is it?" asked Susie Franer, with a little toss, to signify she was as good as anybody, if she wasn't an Episcopalian.

"No, indeed," interposed Laura, quickly. "Everybody has an equal right here, and we must do everything *una voce*, you know."

"We might divide the money," May persisted,

"so much for each school, in proportion to its representatives in the society."

"That's a nice way to get the lion's share for yourself," retorted Susie. "We ought to be much obliged to her, Gertie — you and I, and Georgie. We'd have at least three new books for our library!"

"I thought," said Elsie Raymond, putting in a quiet word by way of diversion, "that we were working for the poor, and not for ourselves at all."

"So we are, of course!" exclaimed two or three together. "What was May thinking about?"

"Aren't there poor children in the Sunday school?" asked May, a little nettled. "And won't the books benefit them, I wonder? It was only a suggestion, though. If anybody has anything better to propose — "

"I'll tell you what *I* think would be nice," said Carrie Haven. "There's poor Mrs. Riley, with her three little children to work for. She takes in sewing, you know, to support herself; and if she had a sewing machine — "

"Well, she *has* got one," interrupted Frank Fisher, looking up from his bead-work. "I

went by her window yesterday, and I saw her clicking away at the machine like a house afire."

"That's all *you* know," retorted Carrie. "The machine isn't hers at all. She has to hire it, and she told me herself that it was very hard work to earn her living, and pay for the rent of the machine. She said that many a day she and her children had nothing but dry bread to eat. Now, I think *she's* an object of charity."

"So do I," said Laura, warmly; "but I never knew she was as poor as that."

"She doesn't tell people," said Carrie. "But aunty went there one day to get some work done, and she asked her questions, and found out more than we ever knew before."

"I thought you said she told *you*," interposed Lizzie.

"Well, and so she did," returned Carrie, coloring up. "I had something, I didn't want it myself, and I wanted to give it to her. So then I went there by myself, and she told me some things. But you know she isn't like the Bobtown people; she's proud, and wouldn't like to have it talked about that she is so poor. If

we do anything for her, we must do it so as not to hurt her feelings."

"What do you all think about it?" asked Laura. "What do *you* think, Elsie?"

"That we couldn't do anything better — if we have money enough," was Elsie's answer. "Perhaps, though, we had better not decide until we see if our fair is a success."

"Elsie is always on the prudent side," laughed Alice. "But if we don't make enough to buy a sewing machine, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves."

"Let's see what they cost," said Laura, picking up a pretty little "Golden Calendar" that lay on a table near her. "Here's the Wheeler and Wilson Almanac, with a list of different styles and prices; pictures of them too. How do you like this? Full case, polished rosewood, and drawers, with satin-wood lining — price two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Nonsense!" said Carrie, flatly. "We can get one for a quarter of that."

"Of course," laughed Laura. "Here's another for fifty-five dollars. 'This machine is adapted for family use,'" she read aloud, "'for seamstresses, for tailoring, and for manufactur-

ing purposes. It will sew all kinds of fabrics. It is the cheapest machine manufactured.' There, that's just what we want — isn't it? And, as Alice says, if we don't make our fair worth fifty-five dollars, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves."

"We ought to make twice, three times as much," said Charlie Cox, "and we will too. We'll get the machine for Mrs. Riley, and a silver medal all round for Ambo."

"A leather one for you," exclaimed Laura, merrily. "I'll make one now out of this scrap of red morocco."

"Suppose we *should* have a lot of money — more than enough for the machine," put in Gertie. "What will we do next?"

'O, don't count any more chickens till they are hatched," was Sydney's sage advice. "If we're all agreed upon the machine, that's an object to work for. We can talk about the silver medals afterwards."

"There's one thing I've thought about," said Laura, with a more hesitating manner than she usually displayed in expressing her thoughts. "I've never said anything in the society, because I suppose it *is* ridiculous and impossible,

and perhaps some of you wouldn't think it worth while, even if we could manage it."

"What is it, though? tell us," they asked, curiously.

"I know," said Sydney, teasingly, "and it's all nonsense. Now, Laura, what *is* the use of being romantic?"

"You be still, Syd," she retorted. "Mamma doesn't think it's nonsense; she thinks — O, here comes mamma herself! Now we'll ask her."

Mrs. Guilford was standing at the door, with little Archie beside her, hiding his face shyly in her dress. Some of the girls ran to kiss him, and coax him in; others sprang up to offer the pleasantest seats in the room to his mother. She was always a welcome visitor in the society, and she never "wore her welcome out" by staying too long, or interfering, except by their own desire, in any of their arrangements or councils. She was ready to give assistance or advice whenever it was wished; but she thought it best, in general, to let them develop their own ideas of self-government.

"What is it I am to be asked?" she said, when the little bustle of her entrance had sub-

sided. "I came in to see what made you all so quiet."

"It's about Janie Russell," Laura answered. "You know what we were talking last night, mamma — and Sydney says it's all nonsense; but is it, now, really?"

"Not that, exactly, but hardly practicable, I'm afraid. What does 'Ambo' say to it?"

"We don't know what it is yet," said several of the girls together.

"Why don't you tell them, then?" asked Mrs. Guilford. "It is your own idea, and not a silly one at all. Perhaps, if you all agreed upon it, it *might* be accomplished, after all."

So Laura explained, that Janie Russell — the lame girl that lived with her old grandmother down by the railroad — had shown her one day a quantity of drawings, all by her own hand. Some were in charcoal, some were in ink, some were in pencil, and they were on the merest odds and ends of paper — old letter-backs, old fly-leaves of books, wrapping-paper, anything she could pick up. But Laura knew enough about drawing to see that they were not bad at all; that they were very good, indeed, in spite of the rough materials, and especially considering that

nobody had ever taught Janie a single rule of the art. She brought home some of the sketches, and showed them to her mother, and afterwards to Miss Gurney, and found her own opinion of their merits promptly confirmed by both. Miss Gurney said there was no doubt that Janie had real talent, which might be improved to very good purpose, if she only had the opportunity of instruction.

So, upon this, Laura had built up a castle in the air: Janie was poor, and would have to work for her living; but she was lame and delicate, and could not go out to service, or do any hard labor; she could sew, but that was a poor dependence: now suppose — only suppose — that she could be sent to the "School of Design," and become an artist! Laura had read of more surprising and less probable things in her "Anecdotes of Painters." But there was one great difficulty — the expense of the undertaking. There was the School of Design at the Cooper Institute with all its advantages and opportunities free to her; but to avail herself of them, Janie must live in New York; and to live in New York, to be lodged, and fed, and clothed,

and taken care of respectably, would require a large sum of money, year after year.

"Of course it's no use," Laura said, when she had explained the matter to her companions. "But still I couldn't help wishing that we *might* make enough by our fair, and you *might* all agree to it, and poor Janie *might* have a chance!"

"And I don't see why she mightn't, for my part!" cried Alice, who had listened with great interest. She was very fond of drawing, and had some little artistic dreams of her own.

"It seems to be a *mighty* matter on the whole," Mrs. Guilford put in, laughingly, "and I am afraid will prove beyond your means, Laura."

"Like Captain Jinks's 'corn and beans,' said Sydney. "Of course it will; and I vote for Mrs. Riley and the sewing machine. I give you warning, Laura: the proceeds of *my* industry shall not be diverted from their legitimate channel," he added, pompously.

"When did you swallow the dictionary?" Laura retorted, a little vexed at his opposition.

"And where does the industry come in?"

asked Alice, saucily. "Has anybody seen it this afternoon?"

"We might manage to do without the proceeds, according to present appearances," Carrie chimed in. And the laugh turned against Master Syd, who, so far, had certainly not enriched the society much by his labor.

"What do you think it would cost?" asked Elsie, who had been pondering the matter in thoughtful silence.

"Three hundred dollars at least," said Mrs. Guilford; "perhaps more, the first year."

"And it would have to be paid *every* year, of course?"

"Well, we could have a fair every year," Laura put in, hastily, afraid of Elsie's veto. "Three hundred dollars isn't so awful, with a whole year to earn it in. And only think, Elsie, how splendid it would be if Janie should turn out a real artist, like Rosa Bonheur, and Miss Hosmer, and Miss —"

"That's all *you* know!" interrupted Sydney, derisively. "Miss Hosmer doesn't paint pictures at all. She's a sculptress."

"I don't care; it's all the same; and you

can just stop making yourself so disagreeable, Sydney."

Laura turned round upon him with a heightened color and a sharper tone in her voice than usual. She had worked herself up into a real excitement, and it was provoking to have Sydney setting himself against her wishes, and "making fun of her," as she considered.

It was nothing but fun, in reality, for he did not care at all how the fair-money was appropriated, and he looked up in surprise at her vexed face.

"I guess I'll clear out of this," he observed, dryly. "It's getting too hot for my complexion. Wouldn't you like some crab-apples, Charlie, just by way of a change, you know?"

And with this sarcastic speech he marched out of the parlor, followed readily by Charlie Cox, who was getting tired of sorting beads and winding worsteds.

Laura felt rather ashamed of herself as she saw them go, and met her mother's reproachful glance in addition. But she was in a "crab-apple mood," and didn't choose to make any concessions.

"I don't care if they do go; they've tormented

us enough, any way. Haven't they, Susie?" was her pettish comment upon their secession. "We can settle our affairs now without being interrupted so often."

"Yes, we can. And do, please, Frank, see if *you* can't be quiet," added Gertie, addressing her brother with unnecessary emphasis. He had been sorting Susie's beads with praiseworthy diligence, and had not been heard to speak for ten minutes at least. It was insulting, therefore, to be desired to "keep quiet" in that public manner, and "the honorary" resented it accordingly.

"I beg permission to retire, Mr. President," he exclaimed, jumping up hastily, and upsetting the whole box of beads by a mischievous *accident* as he did so. "I can't stay to be insulted, and I shall take the liberty of joining my honorable brethren outside. You can pick up the beads, Gertie, after I'm gone," he added, provokingly; and with a saucy bow to Laura, he darted through the open window, and joined Sydney and Charlie on the lawn.

"It's a good riddance of them all," said Carrie. "Boys are a nuisance, in my opinion."

But Susie set up a wail about her beads

that were rolling hopelessly about the floor, half of them irrecoverable; and Laura could not feel comfortable, watching the grave look upon her mother's face, and knowing *she* had brought it there.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WRONG PROPOSED.

OUT of doors the boys were amusing themselves with swinging in the crab tree, and pelting each other with the little, rosy, bitter-sweet apples that were just ripening.

"How they pucker up your mouth!" said Charlie, biting into one; "I wonder if they don't taste like persimmons?"

"Not a bit," said Frank. "Didn't you ever see persimmons? They're little, soft, wrinkled-up, greenish-yellow things, more like a plum than an apple. They have a stone inside, and when they're real ripe they're jolly. But you bite into a green one, and won't it button your tongue up, though!"

"Talking of plums," exclaimed Charlie, — "didn't we have fun last summer, Frank, hooking greengages out of old Van Wyck's orchard?"

"I guess we did," was the prompt answer.

"Don't you wish we had as good a chance this summer?"

"Perhaps we have," said Charlie, significantly.

"Well, I can't see it," Frank retorted. "The place is sold now, and the old fellow that bought it keeps a dog. I wouldn't like to have him flying at my legs."

"I guess I could manage that, if I tried," Charlie answered, looking wise. "The dog stays around the house, and the orchard is off at a distance."

"But you have to go through the grounds, and past the house, to get to the orchard," persisted Frank. "And wouldn't the dog hear you, I'd like to know?"

"Suppose I didn't go through the grounds at all?" asked Charlie. "Suppose I climbed the orchard fence?"

"With all those sharp spikes on top? I'd like to see you!"

"And I'd like to know what you're driving at," Sydney put in. "You talk exactly as if you meant to rob that orchard, Charlie!"

"Well, what if I do?" Charlie returned, with a rather confused laugh. "Where's the harm of

taking a pocket full of plums from such a stingy old chap?"

"It's stealing; that's all," said Sydney, coolly.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the other two in a breath. "That's all humbug, Syd," Frank added. "It can't be stealing to take what nobody misses, and it's such a jolly lark. Why, all the boys do it when they get a chance. You don't know what fun we used to have last summer."

"You ought to hear Joe Bingham, and some of the other fellows up at the Academy, tell about their adventures," put in Charlie. "You remember, Frank, the night they went after watermelons, and hid them in the haystack? They got locked out, of course, and the fellow that was inside, and promised to open the door for them, went off to bed, and cheated them. So they had to climb up the lightning-rod, and nearly broke their necks getting in at a window."

"What fun that must have been!" said Sydney, sarcastically.

"Well, it was," persisted Charlie. "It's the best sort of a lark when there's a little danger in it, and you know it, Syd; so don't be disagreeable."

There was a truth in this which Sydney could

not deny. He liked the excitement of "a little danger" as well as the others, and as they went on rehearsing various other "jolly scrapes" of Joe Bingham and his set at the Academy, his ideas of right and wrong began to grow indistinct, and his heart to thrill with an emulous desire. Charlie Cox was quick to see the change and take advantage of it. He was not a bad boy, and would not have done anything that he considered really dishonest for the world; but he had the usual school-boy obliquity in the matter of fruit. "It was no harm" to take a pocket full of plums, — though the "pocket" held a peck sometimes, — or to carry off a ripe watermelon which he had never planted. It was "just fun" to trick the owners, and escape the dogs, and deceive teachers and parents, and risk one's life and limb, climbing trees, and jumping out of windows, and "shinning up" lightning-rods in the dark. It's the school-boy theory that fruit is common property, or, if it isn't, it ought to be; and Charlie Cox, having accepted this theory fully for himself, saw no wrong in persuading Sydney to act upon it with him.

That Sydney allowed himself to be persuaded was more surprising; for he had certainly been

taught a very opposite doctrine at home. But there were two against one, to say nothing of his own inclination taking part with his tempters; and it ended in his agreeing to join the boys in an unlawful raid upon Colonel Schuyler's orchard, to take place as soon as a certain tree of fine egg plums, well known to Frank and Charlie, should be fully ripe for plunder.

Up stairs, in Sydney's drawer, carefully wrapped in soft paper, lay a dainty little handkerchief with a lace border, and "*Violet*" worked in the corner. Sydney had "advertised" it in the post-office, and made various efforts to find the owner; but nobody had come forward to claim it, and, thanks to Colonel Schuyler's exclusive ideas, his pretty little granddaughter was as much a stranger to the Englewood boys and girls as on the day when she peeped at them through the brier bushes, and lost her handkerchief in the cemetery. Sydney had seen her once; she rode past him one day on Tam O'Shanter, and he had stared after her with open-eyed admiration of her sweet face and golden hair, and her graceful, fearless riding. But he never dreamed that this was "Violet," whose little handkerchief he kept so carefully, any more than he knew now that it was Violet's

grandfather whose plums he meant to pilfer. If he had but guessed how he should find it out!

The tea-bell rang by the time they had arranged their plan, and a troop of the girls came running out to bring in the deserters. Laura was foremost of them, and anxious to "make up" with Sydney. She had succeeded in getting the Society's verdict in Janie's favor, so far, at least, as to have the final decision left in Mrs. Guilford's hands. The proceeds of the fair were to be brought to her, and she was to decide whether there was enough to justify the attempt, and, if so, she had promised to find other ways and means of carrying out, or helping them to carry out, what they had begun. This was even more than Laura had hoped to accomplish; so she was in high good humor with everybody, and ready to apologize, in her fashion, for her momentary crossness.

Her fashion was a little peculiar. "I suppose you mean to beg my pardon now, Syd," she began, saucily, as the boys came forward to meet her. "But you needn't say another word about it. I know you're sorry, and I've made up my mind to forgive you."

"All right," Sydney returned, magnanimously. "I accept with thanks."

"Then kiss me, and never aggravate me again," she commanded, imperiously, putting up her round cheek to his lips. "And now all of you come in to supper before the waffles get cold."

"I should like to pepper Frank's with the beads he spilled," said Susie, spitefully, as they went in. But happily for his digestion, she did not try to carry out her amiable wish. The waffles were hot and crisp, the cut peaches, melting in golden cream, were delicious, and the boys' appetites were not in the least spoiled by any sense of their misdemeanors, past or to be.

Sydney, it is true, had an uneasy consciousness that he had consented to something wrong. He knew his father's straightforward, uncompromising honesty, his mother's clear ideas of truth and honor, so often impressed upon him. The thought of how they would feel towards him if they knew what he was going to do, came across him, with rather a sickening sensation, in the midst of all the merriment going

on at the supper-table. The doctor was in one of his most genial moods, telling stories and making funny speeches, that kept the girls in a gale of laughter and amusement; Mrs. Guilford was pouring out innumerable cups of tea, and keeping everybody's plate replenished, yet found time to entertain the boys most agreeably still. She knew exactly how to talk to them, and Charlie and Frank both admired her immensely, as a woman that was willing "to talk *sense* to a fellow." Sydney admired her, too, but he could not take his usual enjoyment in her conversation.

"Suppose we do steal those plums, and she ever finds it out — what will she say to me?" was the uncomfortable question that kept putting itself in his way.

Why didn't he give it up at once, if he repented so soon? is a question we might ask here. But everybody's experience goes to prove that people constantly do things which they know to be wrong, against their conscience and almost against their will, simply because they have promised. In the school-boy code it was dishonorable "for a fellow to go back on his

word;" and Sydney, though he really wished already that he had not made a rash promise, and dreaded more than he would have acknowledged its possibly painful consequences, had still no idea of escaping them by breaking it.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE ORCHARD.

IT was a moonlight night that was fixed upon for the unlawful excursion; but it had been a dull, sunless day, and the moon sailed under a mist that made her rays very dim and uncertain. Sydney was thankful for it, as he sat by the window of his room waiting for his father to come up to bed before he could slip out to join Frank and Charlie. He was supposed to be in bed himself, having said good night to his mother and Laura half an hour ago; Laura was already asleep in the next room, his mother was in her chamber, the servants had gone up stairs, and the way was all clear except for his father.

But Dr. Guilford seemed to have no intention of retiring early that night. Sydney waited, in weariness and impatience. He dared not lie down, lest he should go to sleep; he could not light his candle again, because his mother would

see the light under the door, and come in to see what was the matter; he could not read, or move about, and there was nothing to do but sit still and watch the misty moonlight, and listen for his father's upward step, which was so long in coming.

It was tiresome enough; but the longest watch must come to an end some time, and this did at last. The doctor finished his writing, turned out the lights, and came up stairs, passing Sydney's door with no suspicion of the eager listener behind it. He had no sooner closed his own, than Sydney stole silently out, and crept down stairs, tiptoe, with his shoes in his hands. The back door was easily opened; its bolts slipped aside noiselessly, having been touched with a feather-tip and a little oil by way of preparation, and he closed it softly behind him, and stood out of doors at last, unseen by any of the family. It was easy enough to cross the lawn in the shadow of the shrubbery, and slip out of the gate; and round the corner, in an empty lot that was boarded in from the street, he found the boys waiting for him. So far the adventure was a complete success. Charlie and Frank were in high spirits, and gave him a jolly welcome, and

all three started off at once for their up-hill walk to Colonel Schuyler's orchard.

It was about half a mile out of the village, the house and lawn fronting on the post-road, but the orchard lying back, and separated by a high, spiked fence from the meadow lands of another proprietor. Two or three railed fences lay between; these the boys leaped over easily, and came at last, with cautious steps, to the spot they had marked out for their operations. The plum tree stood near the fence — so near that a boy who was light and agile could swing himself into the branches without difficulty, if once he had a foothold on the fence itself. Sydney was a good climber, as the others knew very well; it was the knowledge of that fact which made them so eager for his coöperation, and a little vain consciousness of it also that helped to win Sydney's consent.

The whole success of the enterprise depended upon him; he was to "boost" himself, with Charlie's help, upon Frank's shoulders, that were luckily broad and strong, and so scale the wall. Then, balancing his weight for a moment upon the top of the fence, — there was just room be-

tween the spikes for him to plant his feet, — he was to swing off into the nearest tree.

To carry out such a programme required some courage and skill; but Sydney proved himself equal to the task. Charlie helped him up to a standing position on Frank's shoulders; that brought his elbows to the top of the wall; and drawing up cautiously first one foot and then the other, holding on by the spikes, which were luckily not sharp, or very close together, he managed to raise himself upon his feet, and spring off lightly into the tree.

There was a crash of breaking branches, a great rustle of leaves, and flutter of frightened birds, who flew off their nests, chirping and screaming at such a sudden apparition. But Sydney was safe in the midst of the tree, his feet firm on a strong limb, and great mellow plums, ripe and golden, hanging thickly all about him.

The boys outside were more frightened than he. To their startled ears the crashing stems and twigs made noise enough to wake the household; and they held their breath in terror for a moment, expecting to hear the growl and rush

of the fierce dog that lay unchained in his kennel.

All was quiet, though, and Charlie ventured to call out presently, in a smothered voice,—

"Are you there, Syd, all right?"

"All right," Sydney returned, promptly and cheerfully, "and *bushels* of plums!"

"Bully for you!" whispered Frank, excitedly. "Shovel 'em in, Syd, fast as you can. Got your bag safe?"

"Guess I have. Hear the plums rattle in?"

"O, don't talk so loud!" exclaimed Charlie, who was not so bold now as he had been before. "There's that dog, you know; don't let him hear you for the world."

"Pooh! who's afraid?" Sydney answered, boastfully, tossing a plum over the fence. He was elated with success, and a reckless excitement had taken the place of his previous doubts and fears. He leaped about, like a monkey, from one branch to another, stripping off the fruit by handfuls, and stuffing it into the bag, which filled up rapidly. Now and then half a dozen big plums would come rattling over the fence, and Frank and Charlie would scramble after them, though trembling with fear lest the noise should

betray them. Charlie kept entreating him, in anxious whispers, to be careful; but in his excitement Sydney paid little heed to the prudent caution.

"I don't believe there's any dog at all," he whispered back. "If there is, he's too far off to hear me; and, any way, I'm not afraid of him. I'll tell you what, boys: I shan't leave this orchard without some pears, too; I see some splendid ones a little way off."

"Ain't he plucky?" said Frank, admiringly. "Go in for the Bartletts, Syd, by all means. *I* won't tell the old colonel who robbed his orchard."

"You ought not to encourage him, Frank," said Charlie, reproachfully. "You're outside, and you can run if anything happens. But suppose that dog flies at him there — what can he do?"

"Seems to me you've grown very anxious lately," Frank retorted, rather contemptuously. "You were very eager to get Syd into it, and now you're doing your best to scare him out."

"I don't want him to get into danger," was Charlie's answer; "and he will if he goes cruising round the orchard. Somebody'll be

sure to see him, and then there'll be a pretty kettle o' fish."

"You let him alone. Syd's no fool," Frank responded, coolly. Being in a perfectly safe place himself, he could afford to have confidence in Syd's wisdom; but Charlie could not be quite so selfish or indifferent. He made another effort to prevent the rashness of going farther into the orchard.

"We don't want the pears — haven't you got a bag full of plums? Tie it up and throw it over the fence, Syd, and then come out yourself. You've done enough for to-night, old fellow," he whispered, earnestly.

But Sydney was obstinate and defiant of consequences. He could see the fine large pears hanging thick on several trees not far off, for the clouds were drifting away from the moon, and a soft, clear light was increasing. It showed him treasures of ripe fruit, — peaches and apricots, as well as pears and plums, — gleaming out from the dark foliage; and having "got his hand in," as he said to himself, he was determined to select a few specimens of each kind before he left the orchard. So he swung himself down to the ground, regardless of Charlie's remonstrances,

and, with his bag over his shoulder, stole lightly on from tree to tree, plucking everything within reach of his arm.

The bag was soon full, to its utmost capacity. But even then he was not satisfied. Clusters of tempting nectarines hung over his head, mellow apples dotted the grass at his feet; and the rapacious spirit which had suddenly taken possession of him, made him greedy of everything. He stuffed his pockets, jacket, and trousers; he took off his hat and filled that; and at last he started back to the fence, having no room for anything more, to throw his plunder over to his accomplices.

He found on the way, however, as other robbers have done before him, that he had taken too much for his own comfort. The bag was heavy, and required both hands; so he had to put the hat down and leave it till he should come back. He left it in a safe place, never thinking of any difficulty in finding it again, and hurried on to the fence with his bag. By this time even Frank was getting impatient to be gone.

"Come, Syd, hurry up," he cried. "You've got enough, and it's time we were home. Throw

us the plunder, and then scramble over yourself."

"Yes, do," Charlie added, urgently. "And be careful about the spikes, Syd. If you once get back without breaking your neck, I shall be thankful."

"Never you fear," Sydney laughed. "I've no intention of breaking my neck, and I've had a real jolly time. Sorry for you fellows over there that haven't had any fun!"

"Better not laugh till you're out of the woods," Frank advised. "We're on the safe side, at any rate."

"Heave that bag over, and stop your gabble," put in Charlie, impatiently.

"Look out, then — here goes!" and Sydney tossed it up with all his strength. It cleared the spikes, and fell with a dull thud into the arms that were eagerly extended to catch it on the other side.

"Now it's your turn," cried Charlie, eagerly "Swing over, Syd, and let's go home. What a jolly lot of fruit!"

"That isn't all, either," Sydney returned, triumphantly. "I've left a hat full behind me up in the orchard."

"Never mind that," said Charlie, hastily; "we've got enough without it. Don't go back again, Syd, whatever you do. I *think* I hear that dog!"

"Nonsense! There isn't any dog," was the careless answer.

"Don't be a fool," Charlie exclaimed, angrily. "I tell you there is a dog, and a fierce one, too. If you don't come out, I'll go and leave you, Syd, I declare I will."

"Well, you'd better," Sydney retorted. "That would be an honorable proceeding on your part."

"Why don't you come, then? You're enough to try the patience of Job!"

"I've left my hat in the orchard. I've got to go back for it, unless you want me to go home bareheaded."

"O, good gracious!" Charlie groaned with impatience and vexation. "We'll all come to grief yet, I know it. Why couldn't he be satisfied with such a bag full?"

"Don't be such a muff, Charlie," Frank put in, rather scornfully. "You've badgered Syd the whole time, and I think he's done splendidly,

for my part. There's no such desperate hurry to get home, after all; let him alone."

And Frank seated himself on the ground, and began to eat a pear with cool unconcern. He wondered at Charlie's nervousness; but Charlie could not get over an instinctive dread, that had possessed him all the time, of trouble ahead for Sydney. He felt more acutely than Frank the responsibility of having persuaded him into joining them; and he could not help reproaching himself for putting him foremost to take all the risks, while he and Frank remained in comparative safety. It was the sting of this consciousness which made him so anxious, and prevented the possibility of any peace of mind until Sydney was outside again. Instead of sitting down to eat fruit, as Frank did, he wandered restlessly to and fro, starting at every sound, and muttering impatient exclamations under his breath.

Sydney, meanwhile, went hastily back to look for his hat. He had set it very carefully on the forked branch of a young pear tree, the last one from which he had gathered fruit. But, through some curious forgetfulness, or nervousness (for Charlie's anxiety had begun to affect him), he imagined that he had left it on the ground, and

went poking about with his eyes at his feet, looking vainly for a thing that was on a level with his head. The moon began to grow dim again, to increase his perplexity; a slow-moving cloud sailed over her fair face, and darkened it so effectually that he could no longer distinguish objects with any clearness. He was surrounded with a bower of foliage, but he could not pick out the different trees which had guided him in some sort before; he could not even see the fence behind which his companions waited, and so could not tell whether, in his blind groping about, he was keeping near them, or going towards the unsafe neighborhood of the house and garden.

He had not the least desire to prove his bravery by doing that; but as it generally happens that when people get bewildered they go in the direction exactly opposite to the one they wish and intend, so it happened in this case. Sydney groped around, getting more and more bewildered and uncertain, and more and more anxious about his hat, which had disappeared so unaccountably, and with every step went farther away, not only from the hat, but from his friends. Outside, Charlie was fuming and fretting, and

even Frank beginning to fidget at the long delay; inside, Sydney was marching unconsciously right into the dog's teeth.

The cloud-bank broke up suddenly, and a bright ray shot out from the gloom. It lighted up not only the shadowy orchard: the soft, fair radiance streamed over a spacious garden, a broad lawn, a stately stone mansion, and all three were suddenly revealed to the boy's startled eyes. He found himself standing outside of the sheltering trees, at the foot of a smooth green slope, above which spread out wide garden alleys, brilliant flower-beds, and clumps of shrubbery; and beyond these rose up the many-windowed, ivy-wreathed wall of the old manor-house.

An involuntary cry of amazement and consternation broke from his lips. It was answered instantly by a low, thunderous growl; a huge black dog sprang from his kennel, shook his shaggy sides, looked around him and sniffed the air for a moment, and then, with long, swinging leaps, came bounding down the alley.

Sydney stood as if turned to stone; he saw the huge creature springing towards him, but he seemed to have lost the power of motion. He

knew that escape was hopeless, and with one pitiful cry for help, he flung himself on the ground, face downwards, just as the faithful guardian of his master's property leaped upon him.

What happened to him then for a minute or two Sydney never knew. In his wild terror he gave himself up for lost, and as the Irishman said, "he thought he was kilt intirely." He felt the huge paws holding him down, the savage teeth at his throat; he tried to gasp out a prayer, but he could not find the words, and with a despairing murmur, "Mamma, mamma!" he swooned outright from sheer terror.

CHAPTER IX.

VIOLET TO THE RESCUE.

IF he had not lost consciousness so suddenly, he would have discovered that his cry for help had been heard. From one of the upper windows of the old house a faint light was shining, and, half encircled by the vines that clustered over the casement, a sweet little face, like a picture set in a rustic frame, was peeping out into the moonlight.

It was certainly long past Miss Violet's bedtime. The old clock in the hall had struck the half hour since midnight, and all the lights in the house were out except her own. Grandpapa had kissed her good night three hours and a half ago, and it was full two hours since he had laid his own head on his pillow. The servants had all gone to bed long ago. Mrs. Bunn was so sound asleep that she never heard the mice nibbling in her closet, and in Mrs. Weldon's room everything

was dark and quiet. Why was it that Violet was keeping this midnight watch, the only wakeful spirit in the house?

One might have answered that question by looking into her room, for beside the lamp upon the table lay a new book, open at the last page. Instead of going to bed dutifully when she retired to her chamber, she had taken up "*Leslie Goldthwaite*," — a treasure only that day acquired, — and lost in the fascination of that unequalled summer in the White Mountains, she had kept no account of time. The hours flew unheeded while her golden locks drooped over the delightful pages; the fitful moonlight brightened and faded by turns, while she watched with Leslie the glory of sunrise on the mountain-tops, hunted "garnet-geodes" for "Gray-wacke," and laughed over Sin Saxon's irresistible "howl."

It was after midnight before the last page was turned, and even then Violet was not in the least sleepy. Her thoughts were still running on the various scenes and characters of her story, and the moonlight was so bright now, and the wavering shadows of leaf and vine so lovely, that to do so stupid a thing as go to bed was quite out of the question. It was much more delightful to

sit up in the window-seat and listen to the katydids, and watch the fleecy clouds with silver linings that floated so airily around the bonnie Lady Moon.

So Violet turned her lamp down to its smallest blue flame, and perched herself like a fairy in the ivy-wreathed window, laughing softly to herself at the oddity of being up, and dressed, and wide awake, at a time when all the world was asleep. A shadowy misgiving crossed her mind that grandpapa might not approve of such a vigil, and would probably send her to her pillow at once if he could see her. Conscience vaguely suggested that if this was the case, she ought not to linger any longer; but Violet trifled a little with conscience to-night, and coaxed her with specious pleadings. It couldn't really be any harm to sit up when it was impossible to go to sleep; and wasn't it better to be here watching that beautiful, heavenly sky, that gave her such happy thoughts, than to be tossing and tumbling in a stupid old bed?

So Violet lingered, and the crickets chirped, and the katydids sang, and chattered, and contradicted each other, —

"Katy did, Katy didn't,
Katy did, did, *did*," —

and the clouds sailed through the sky, now gloomy and dense, shutting up the Lady Moon in a black prison; now broken with ragged rifts through which her sweet face smiled serenely again; and all manner of quaint thoughts and fancies were keeping company with the moon's changes, in the little wakeful spirit that watched it.

She had been alone so much of her life, solitary at least, amongst grown-up people, that she had fallen into a habit of making companionship for herself with her own imaginations. She built castles in the air, wonderful and sweet as Mrs. Browning's "House in the Clouds;" she went down into the sea caves, where "the wild white horses foam and fret," and the little mermaidens ride them; she peered into the gruesome caverns where the gnomes and kobolds watch over their golden treasures; she danced with fairies in enchanted gardens, and found out the secrets of bloom and perfume; she floated on storm-clouds, and crossed rainbow bridges; she soared up to the golden gates of Paradise itself, and dreamed her innocent, childish dreams of things celestial.

She got no harm from indulging these fancies; they created for her a somewhat unreal atmosphere, but they kept her simple and pure, and

left no room for the commonplace vanities that fill up so many little feminine brains. They furnished her with a delightful occupation, too, for she put them into pictures, and filled her portfolio with sketches of pixies and water-lilies, brownies peeping out of old ruined castles, and banshees flying on windy, moonlit clouds. Her grandfather would laugh at them, and say, "Where do you get such absurd ideas?" but secretly he recognized the delicate grace and beauty of her pictured fancies, and was proud of the talent they evinced. As for Violet herself, she delighted in her pretty gift, without guessing that she did anything remarkable.

She had truly an artist's eye, however, that appropriated every suggestion of beauty; there were wonderful pictures in those shifting clouds, those sudden bursts of light, those wavering leaf-shadows which took on so many grotesque shapes; and she was grouping them mentally into a "Goblin Dance," to be traced on paper some time, when Sydney's cry for help suddenly reached her ears.

It was not a loud or sharp cry, that would have startled any one from sleep; it was a frightened, half-smothered wail, sounding far away,

and no one else heard it. If Violet had been reading still, away from the window, it would have passed unnoticed; but as she sat there, watching and listening, it came to her ears with perfect distinctness, a pitiful call of "Help! help!"

She sprang to her feet involuntarily, and as she did so she heard the savage growl of the dog. A suspicion of the truth flashed into her mind: without stopping to consider what was the best to be done, she obeyed her first impulse, which was to step out upon the gallery that ran outside of the window, and see if she could discover the tramp or burglar that the great watch-dog had surprised. From the way her window fronted there was nothing to be seen; but another low growl from the dog drew her round to the south angle of the balcony. There lay the garden below her, flooded with moonlight, and there, at the foot of the green slope that verged to the orchard, was a little heap upon the ground, black and motionless against the clear white light.

Violet stood for one moment, uncertain and hesitating: she could see the dog's figure plainly, but the outline of the other was indistinct; it looked like a child; and with a sudden, unrea-

soning conviction that it was no dangerous robber, but some helpless, innocent creature that had been attacked, the young girl, brave as she was tender-hearted and delicate, resolved to go to the rescue. There was no time for deliberation, or to waken any one: the dog was fierce, and might do harm, but Violet knew that he would obey a word from her. She could call him off if she discovered that it was a harmless person he had attacked; and if it were really a burglar or thief, he would protect her.

These thoughts went quickly through her mind, and her resolve was taken on the instant. There was no outside descent from the gallery; but just where she stood was a window that opened above a landing-place of the main stairway of the house. By some accident it had not been closed that night, and Violet raised herself up to the sill, leaped lightly down to the landing below, and flew with noiseless feet down the broad, thickly-carpeted steps, till she reached the hall. The heavy doors were locked, and barred, and bolted; she knew she could not open them without noise and loss of time; but there was a French window, whose fastenings yielded easily to her hands. She was outside of it in a moment, standing upon

the stone terrace, and in another, hearing the dog's growl again, she was flying down the garden alley towards the orchard close.

Sydney had recovered his senses by this time. The blank unconsciousness of his sudden terror was gradually giving way to a full realization of his unpleasant predicament. There was a warm, heavy weight upon his shoulders, and a most uncomfortable pressure of two great paws upon the back of his neck. He tried to lift his head, but the paws gripped his throat, and warned him to lie still. Lying so, perfectly powerless to help himself, and not daring to cry aloud for assistance from others, his reflections, as one may imagine, were not of the most cheerful description.

"What a fool I was!" he groaned inwardly; "what a little bragging, conceited fool! Why couldn't I be satisfied with what I had? why didn't I go back when Charlie wanted me? and, O, dear! why did I ever come at all? That's the mischief of it — if I only had kept out of a thing that I knew was wrong! O, mamma, mamma, what trouble and shame I have made for you!"

It was the bitterest thought of all; and big boy as he was, Sydney did not try to control the hot

tears of shame and distress that rolled down his cheeks.

"I shall never dare to look anybody in the face again," he went on, despairingly. "It will be all over the village, and papa will hear of it wherever he goes. O, dear! if I could get away from this beast! — I never can, though. He'll choke me to death, and I don't care if he does. O, dear, dear, dear!"

He buried his head in the grass, and sobbed aloud in hopeless misery and wretchedness. It was no use trying to be brave; there was only one way of escape from his humiliating position, he knew, and that was worse even than anything the dog could do. By and by they would hear him at the house, and then the servants would come, and call the dog off, and drag *him*, like a thief, before the master. What could he say for himself, then? he, Sydney Guilford, son of a man that all Englewood, far and near, respected, — he would have to hang his head, and confess his guilt, like any other thief caught in the act; and his father, and his mother, and Laura would have to bear the shame of it, too. All for a few miserable plums and peaches!

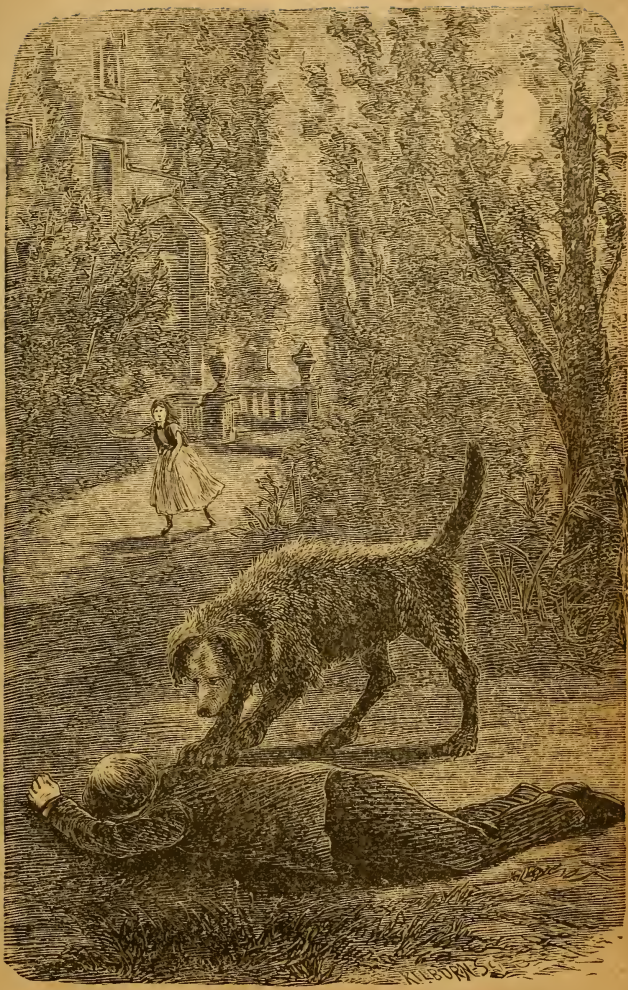
A light, quick step sounded presently on the garden walk above him.

"Now they've come!" he thought, desperately, and plunged his face deeper in the thick grass. The dog lifted his head up, wagged his tail, and gave a little welcoming bark.

"Bruno! Bruno! what are you doing, Bruno?" said a soft, girlish voice, in a cautious whisper; and then Sydney heard the rustle of a girl's skirts, as some one ran lightly down the slope, and felt his neck suddenly released from the pressure of the dog's paws. But shame kept his head down still, though he was free at last; he could not look up to face his deliverer, though he was conscious of a sudden sense of hope that thrilled him as he heard the sweet, girlish accents.

"Who is here? what is the matter?" the voice asked again, anxiously. "Has Bruno hurt you? Get up, and speak to me!"

Violet had seen at a glance that this was no fierce robber: it was only a boy, and a well-dressed boy, too; and, with a girl's quick wit, she had guessed at the truth instantly. The story of the cherry stones flashed back to her memory, and with it her grandfather's pungent remarks concerning thieves, small and great.



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"This boy has been stealing fruit," was her rapid conclusion; "and if grandpapa gets hold of him, he will make an example of him. He said he would; but it's a pity to punish him, poor fellow! just for a little fruit; and he looks like a nice boy, too. I've a great mind to let him go, and never tell!"

With this charitable, but not strictly upright, purpose, she stooped over Sydney's prostrate figure, and laid a little soft hand upon his shoulder.

"Get up," she whispered, "and go away. I'll keep Bruno quiet if you'll go directly. But if grandpapa comes, he won't let you off so easily. Down, Bruno! and let him alone."

The dog seemed to guess that the ends of justice were going to be defeated; he gave a growl, and straightened himself to spring again, but Violet held him back, with her hand upon his collar, and a gentle but decided command. Sydney rose up slowly from the ground; he could not hide his face forever, ashamed as he was to show it, and this opportunity of escape was so much better than anything he could have expected, that it would have been the height of folly not to avail himself of it.

Violet watched him, her heart beating fast with excitement, as he drew himself up and turned his face towards her. She was frightened at her own boldness in telling him to go when she was sure that he had been committing a trespass, but she did not feel in the least afraid of the boy himself. In fact, there was so much real shame and regret in his eyes when they met hers that she felt nothing but pity for him; especially when he began to thank her, in a confused and distressed sort of way, for her kindness to him.

"I never did anything like this before," he stammered out, awkwardly. "I suppose you won't believe me, though."

"Yes, I will, if you say so," Violet answered, fearlessly. "You don't look like a bad boy — though what you've been doing," she added, reprovingly, "is very bad indeed. You ought to know better than to steal here in the night, like this, to take our fruit. If you had come to the house, any day, and asked for it, my grandpapa would have given you all you wanted; but it makes him very angry to have people take it without leave. He says it's just as wicked to steal fruit as to steal money."

"I suppose it is," said Sydney, with a rueful air. "My father always told me the same thing."

"Why do you do it, then?" she asked, quickly.

"Because I'm an idiot," was his disgusted answer.

"A very good reason," she retorted, saucily; and the severe expression which she had called up to her face, melted away in a smile so merry and sweet, that Sydney's heart leaped up involuntarily.

"I wonder what makes you so kind to me," he exclaimed, looking up at her with a sudden admiring perception of her beauty and goodness. "Why didn't you let the dog choke me, or bring somebody to punish me? I deserve to be punished, you know."

"I dare say you do," she assented, with a grave little nod. "But I think you are sorry, and I don't believe you will try it again."

"How did you happen to be awake, this time of night? It must be very late for you," he asked.

"So it is, and every one else is asleep. But I sat up late, because I was reading, and I wanted

to finish my book. That's the way I happened to hear you when you cried 'help!'"

"Did you come out here all alone, on purpose to help me?" Sydney cried, in amazement.

"Yes, I did," was her simple answer. "I heard you call out, and I heard the dog, and I was afraid he would hurt you if I waited to wake up grandpapa, or anybody. So I just ran down here as fast as I could."

"But you didn't know it was *I*," Sydney exclaimed, in still greater astonishment. "It might have been a — a *real* thief — a bad man — a burglar! I should think a girl like you wouldn't have dared!"

"I knew Bruno could take care of me, if there was any danger," she said, quietly.

Sydney looked at her again with eyes full of admiration. "You're the bravest girl I ever saw," he said, warmly, "and the kindest, and the prettiest. You've been just like an angel to me, and you look like one, too!"

It was not just then a very exaggerated statement; for, as Violet stood there in her white dress, with her lovely golden hair flowing loose over her shoulders, and the soft moonlight refining every delicate feature, there was indeed

something angelic in her appearance. But she laughed her own little merry laugh at "such a ridiculous idea."

"You had better go away," she said, "instead of stopping here to say such silly things. I must go back to the house directly, and I would advise you to get out of Bruno's reach as quickly as possible. I hope it will be a lesson to you in future," she added, with a little dignified air, as she turned away. "It's not a gentlemanly thing, to say the least of it, to be robbing orchards."

"I'll never do it again as long as I live," Sydney cried, eagerly, coming nearer to her, and holding out his hand. "I wish you'd shake hands with me, just to show you believe me."

Violet held out her hand readily. "Of course I will," she said; and he grasped it with a squeeze.

"Tell me your name, too," he continued, holding the little hand tight. "Mine is Sydney Guilford; and, some time or other, — may be, — you will let me get acquainted with you, and prove to you that I'm not such a mean sneak as I look like to-night."

"I don't know about getting acquainted," said

Violet, drawing back a little. "My grandpapa does not let me have acquaintances, and I don't suppose I shall ever see you any more. But I'll tell you my name. It is Violet — Violet Schuyler."

"Violet?" Sydney exclaimed, with a sudden recollection of the little handkerchief. "Were you ever in Dale cemetery? Did you lose something there one day — a pretty little handkerchief, with your name worked on it?"

"I've lost lots of handkerchiefs, with my name on them," she answered, looking puzzled. "I don't know if I lost one in Dale cemetery — O, yes, I do, though," she interrupted herself suddenly. "It was a good while ago, one day in June, when we first came to live in Englewood. Yes, I remember now; I lost my handkerchief that day that I saw all the boys and girls in the woods having a tea-party."

"Yes, it was the day of our picnic," Sydney returned, eagerly. "Were *you* in the woods then? did you see us?"

"I saw a crowd of boys and girls — were *you* there?" she answered, as eagerly. "I was behind the bushes, and I peeped through, and

saw them making tea, and setting out lunch with a table-cloth on the grass."

"It was our picnic; of course I was there," said Sydney, excitedly. "I wish I had known you were so near!"

"Grandpapa scolded me for peeping, when I came home and told him. But it looked so pleasant to see you all so merry together, building the fire, and making the tea, and losing the lemonade. I heard all the fuss about that, and it was so funny, I thought I should laugh out loud more than once. How odd it is that you should be one of those boys! and that you should find my handkerchief — and then — that I should find *you* —"

"Robbing your grandfather's plum trees," interrupted Sydney, bitterly. "That's the oddest thing of all. But I haven't stolen your handkerchief, at any rate, Miss Violet. I tried to find out the owner for a long time, and then I put it away safely. I shall bring it to you to-morrow."

"O, never mind it; I don't care about it at all," she said, hastily. "You must really go away now; don't stay another minute. There's a light in the house — somebody is up!"

"Good by, then!" he exclaimed, giving her

little hand another energetic squeeze. "I'll never forget you as long as I live!"

And he darted into the orchard, while Violet held Bruno's collar firmly, and stroked his head with her hand; whispering softly to him to prevent the bark or growl which might be heard at the house. Bruno was quiet under her caresses, though his doggish brain was evidently rather puzzled by this ending to the affair. It was not in his experience of things to let an offender escape scot-free; but, as Miss Violet would have it so, it must be all right. So he sniffed, and wagged his tail at her coaxing words, and suffered himself to be led back quietly to his kennel, while Sydney was making all speed through the orchard. He had made up his mind to leave his hat to its fate, and waste not a moment in looking for it. But as luck would have it, he ran past the very tree where he had left it, and a friendly moonbeam suddenly revealed it to him, perched in the fork of the branches, with its luscious contents all undisturbed.

He snatched it with eager delight, tossed on the ground the fruit that he had selected so carefully, and, jamming the hat on his head, hurried on to the fence behind which Charlie and Frank

were waiting still in a sort of dumb despair. It was not really half an hour since Sydney had left them, to go back for his hat, although so much had happened in the mean while. But to them, waiting so anxiously, and ignorant of what was going on, it had seemed an eternity. Frank had stuffed himself with pears and plums, and so diverted his anxiety for a time; but Charlie had been in a state of unmitigated misery, imagining every misfortune that could possibly happen to Sydney, and shaking in his boots with terror, lest the old colonel, or the dog, or something worse, should suddenly rush out upon them also.

Never was a more welcome sound than Sydney's hurried footsteps, when they came at last. Charlie sprang up with an inexpressible sense of relief, and Frank exclaimed, under his breath, "There he is, now!" with an eagerness that showed an equal anxiety.

"Are you there, boys?" came, in a nervous whisper, from the other side of the fence. "Look out for me when I swing over."

"All right," Charlie returned. "Hurry up!" And the next minute Sydney was in the plum tree, swinging himself from branch to branch, and finally reaching a foothold on the fence once

more. Frank lent his shoulders for a stepping-stone, and Charlie caught him as he scrambled down; and both together began to pour out questions, which Sydney cut off at the root.

"Run as fast as you can — they've seen us at the house!"

And there was no stopping to parley after this, on Charlie's part. He grabbed the bag and shot across the meadow, swift as an arrow; the others followed as rapidly, and the three hardly drew breath till they were safe on the high road again, and Colonel Schuyler's orchard far behind their backs.

CHAPTER X.

VIOLET'S DILEMMA.

"NOW, Bruno, old fellow, lie down. It's all right, sir; so you be quiet," Violet whispered, with a final pat on the shaggy head as she turned away from the kennel.

The dog lay down, obediently, and his young mistress hurried back to the house, her heart trembling, it must be confessed, with various fears, in addition to the excitement of this midnight adventure. She had seen a sudden light shine out from one of the windows, and the first frightened thought was, that her absence had been discovered, by her grandfather perhaps, or her governess. If that were so, she knew the alarm it would excite, and how quickly everybody would be roused to look for her; and then, how could she account for her leaving her room? To tell anything but the truth was, of course, not to be thought of; but to tell that would not only

betray the boy, whom she had promised to protect, but bring herself into disgrace with her grandfather. She knew his opinions about such matters, and that he would not approve of her conduct; on the contrary, that he would be very much annoyed by it altogether.

At her sitting up so late, in the first place, which was always out of rule; then at her rashness in venturing out of the house alone at such a time, and for such a reason; and lastly at her interference with Bruno in the proper discharge of his duty. She had heard him utter stringent sentiments against the weakness and wickedness of those who encouraged wrong-doing by excusing and shielding it. "Pity the criminal, but punish the crime," was his motto; and Violet knew that his practice always agreed with his theory.

So it is plain that she had reason to be uneasy in view of an explanation with him. There was nothing in the world that she dreaded so much as to fall under his displeasure: it had happened once or twice in her life, and they were wretched times indeed, though she had not had to suffer any of the ordinary pains and penalties by which children are punished for misdemeanors.

Colonel Schuyler had his own method of expressing his displeasure; and Violet felt it exactly as he meant that she should. But she feared it so, that, to avoid it, she was very anxious to keep this night's adventure entirely out of his knowledge.

Whether this was right or wrong she did not like to consider. In her own heart, which inclined to mercy rather than stern justice, she did not feel very guilty for what she had done. Boys always would rob orchards — it was expected of them; and this was such a "nice boy"! He seemed so sorry, too, and ashamed; it would have been such a pity to let Bruno hurt him, or to have grandpapa "make an example of him" in some terrible way. No, Violet could not help feeling glad that he had got off in safety; and though, perhaps it was disobedient, and it was certainly very uncomfortable, to keep a secret, yet still —

"I mean to do it," was her unspoken determination. "If nobody saw me, there is no need for me to tell at all. It would only vex grandpapa, and get me a scolding; and if I keep it to myself, nobody will be the worse. I only wish I knew whether I have been missed or not!"

She trod lightly across the stone terrace, and

listened cautiously at the window, which she had left open, before she ventured to step inside. Everything was silent and shadowy within; only the moonlight dividing the darkness on either side of the window, and a solitary cricket chirping in a corner of the hall. Out of doors the chattering katy-dids, and the rustling wind of the oak trees, and fairy-like arabesques of light and shade on the stone floor at her feet. Nothing at all to prove that the whole household was not as deep in slumber as the palace of the Sleeping Beauty; and with a lightened heart Violet stole in again, closed the window behind her, and crept, cat-like, up the staircase.

At the first landing, where the stairs turned, she stopped suddenly. A yellow light streamed across the entry, and in the open doorway of her room, a candle in her hand, and a dressing-gown over her night-dress, stood Mrs. Weldon, Violet's governess. There was an end, at once, to all her hopes of getting back to her own room without being seen!

Mrs. Weldon stepped forward hastily as she caught sight of the little figure on the landing.

"What a fright you have given me, Violet!" she exclaimed, nervously. "Why are you down

stairs at this hour of the night? What in the world have you been doing?"

"Nothing dreadful," Violet answered, trying to appear unconcerned, though she trembled all over at this unexpected encounter. "I sat up too late to-night, and you will have to scold me, I suppose. But I won't do it again."

"Do you mean to say you have never been to bed at all?" asked Mrs. Weldon, sharply. "You went up stairs at nine o'clock, and it is now nearly one!"

"Is it so late as that?" Violet hung her head guiltily. "I didn't mean to do it, Mrs. Weldon, indeed. I'm sorry, and I'll go to bed now directly."

"You'll come into my room first," said her governess, "and tell me what all this means. There's something here that I don't quite understand;" and taking Violet's hand, she led her, unresisting, into the room, and closed the door.

"Now explain to me, please," she continued, looking closely into her face, "why you sat up so late, when you know it is not your grandfather's wish; and especially why you are down stairs in the dark, instead of in your own room?"

Violet's face flushed with confusion and dis-

tress; Mrs. Weldon's look was severe, her tone was cold and judicial; it was plain that she suspected something wrong, and that she meant to investigate the matter fully. How could Violet answer such questions without betraying her secret?

"I have been reading," was all she could say, with a rather faltering voice. "Grandpapa gave me a new book to-day, and I was so interested in it that I didn't see how late it was growing."

"You knew it was not right to read at all, when you were sent up to go to bed," said Mrs. Weldon, coldly.

"Grandpapa has never forbidden me," Violet answered, timidly.

"That's an evasion of the truth. There should be no need of an express command for something that is always understood. I am surprised at you, Violet;" and Mrs. Weldon's look and tone expressed severe disapproval.

"This is not all, however," she continued. "You were reading up stairs; I saw the book on your table; but what were you doing in the lower part of the house?"

"I was not doing anything wrong," said Violet,

in a low voice, and not very sure that she was telling the strict truth.

"Then you will not object to informing me, I suppose," said her governess. "What took you down stairs, pray? I am really curious to know."

"I can't tell you," Violet answered, uneasily. "Please don't ask me. I have promised not to tell."

"Promised whom? This is a very singular affair!" Mrs. Weldon exclaimed in amazement. "Here you are, a young girl — a child — wandering about the house in the dead of the night; and when I ask what you are doing, you have *promised not to tell!* You surely cannot think, Violet, that I shall suffer such a thing to pass unexplained. I should be fulfilling my duty very poorly if I did."

"I have not done anything to be ashamed of," said Violet, twisting her fingers nervously. "I heard Bruno growling, and I went down to see what was the matter with him."

Mrs. Weldon gave her a look, incredulous, and almost contemptuous. "I never knew you to tell a falsehood before, Violet; but you cannot expect me to believe anything so absurd as that."

"It is true, all the same," Violet returned, her face flushing indignantly at the scornful tone. "I went down stairs because I heard Bruno; that was exactly the reason."

"And it was to Bruno, I suppose, that you gave your promise not to tell."

"No, it wasn't," said Violet, angrily, her temper giving way under so much repressed excitement, and her self-love wounded by the charge of falsehood. "But I will not tell you another word. I have said the truth, and you think I am telling wrong stories. I never do tell wrong stories, and it is very unkind to speak to me in that sarcastic way, as if you did not believe one word I said."

She burst into tears, and sobbed passionately for a minute or two, unable to bear longer the strain upon her self-control. It was the natural outlet for the nervous excitement of the past hour; but Mrs. Weldon, being ignorant of the real cause, considered it a mere display of temper, and regarded her with surprise and displeasure.

"You will waken your grandfather if you do not control yourself," she said; "and it is not necessary to distress him, to-night at least, with your incomprehensible behavior. Since you re-

fuse to explain it, I think you had better go to your room now; but to-morrow we shall have to discuss this matter again."

She opened the door, and Violet darted out without answering, and ran to her own room at the end of the corridor. There she threw herself on the bed, and sobbed out her vexation and excitement without interruption. It was so provoking, it was so unfortunate, that her governess had waked up! Why couldn't she have slept one half hour longer? and then everything would have been right.

It was rather singular that Violet blamed her governess more for waking up than she did Sydney for having been the cause of all the trouble. She thought less of the fault which he had committed than of his handsome eyes, and the way in which he had praised and thanked her, and said she looked like an angel. A perfect stranger as he was, she could not bear the thought of betraying his misdemeanor even to her governess; and she went to sleep finally, quite decided not to tell her anything about the affair in the orchard.

Mrs. Weldon, on her part, went to sleep with an equal determination to have the whole matter explained in the morning. She was thoroughly

astonished at Violet's behavior, so unlike anything that had ever happened before, and not a little indignant at what she considered her obstinacy, and evasion of the truth. She had been frightened at finding her absent from her room at so late an hour, and was just about going down stairs, in great anxiety, to look for her, when Violet suddenly made her appearance. The reaction of feeling when she saw her quite safe, and fully dressed, showing she had not yet been in bed, gave a certain sharpness to her tone and words that irritated Violet, and did not invite confidence or confession. If she had spoken more kindly — less in the way of reproof, with something wrong taken for granted — there would have been a different result. Violet loved her governess, and was not so much afraid of her disapproval as she was of her grandfather's. With more gentleness and forbearance, Mrs. Weldon could have won the whole story from her; but now it was too late.

Violet was indignant at the charge of untruthfulness, and did not choose to remember that her own conduct made the suspicion a very natural one. She felt aggrieved by Mrs. Weldon's severe tone, and it became a temptation to make a hero-

ine of herself, and submit to reproof, perhaps punishment, for keeping silence, rather than tell the truth, which would bring blame upon another.

So there was no inclination to yield, on either side, when they met again the next day. Mrs. Weldon gave Violet a cold and grave "good morning," which was answered without any warmth or cheerfulness; and when breakfast was over, and lessons began, there was the same uncomfortable constraint upon everything. Violet repeated her tasks with the sullen air of a person who has been aggrieved, and her governess listened to them in cold and silent disapproval. There was none of the comment and explanation, none of the pleasant, discursive between-talk, which had made lesson hours so interesting, and taught her so much more than the mere books had ever done. It was all formal and dreary, and overshadowed with the anticipation of the inevitable "lecture" that must follow.

When the study hour was over, after recitations, Mrs. Weldon opened the subject.

"If you have anything to tell me, Violet, to justify your behavior last night, I shall be very glad to hear it," she said. "You have had time enough to reflect upon it, and to see, I hope,

that it is your duty to give me a candid explanation."

Violet's reflections had not tended to that conclusion, however. "I can't tell you anything more than I did last night," she answered, with a determined expression.

"And you expect me to be satisfied with that?" asked her governess. "As a sensible girl, can you honestly think that I should do my duty to you if I did not try to find out the truth of this matter?"

"I think," — Violet hung her head in a moment's confusion, then lifted it up haughtily, with red cheeks, — "I think you might take my word for the truth of the matter! I never have told you a falsehood, never!"

"That isn't the question," Mrs. Weldon returned calmly. "You may have spoken the truth as far as it goes, — I will allow that, — but, by your own showing, there is more that you will not tell. I claim that as your governess, responsible to your grandfather for your good behavior, it is my right and duty to know the whole affair. You have only told me a part."

"I can't help it; it's all I can tell," said Violet, half pettishly, half sullenly. "I didn't go down

stairs for any wrong purpose, and when I say so, you might believe me, and be satisfied."

"Excuse me, my dear." Mrs. Weldon smiled rather sarcastically. "I am so far from being satisfied that, if you persist in this secrecy, I shall be forced to adopt a very unpleasant alternative."

Violet looked up with flashing eyes. "You mean to tell grandpapa, I suppose?"

"Exactly; unless you choose to prevent it. I should very much prefer not to have to appeal to him."

"I think you are too unkind," Violet exclaimed, the tears springing to her eyes. "You will make grandpapa angry with me, and bring me into trouble, when I have done nothing wrong, nothing wrong."

"My dear, it lies with you to prove that, and there is nothing I wish so much," said Mrs. Weldon, gently.

"You might believe what I say," sobbed Violet.

"It is what you leave unsaid that makes the mischief," returned her governess. "You must have had a reason for being down stairs in the dark, after midnight, when every one else was in bed. If it was a good reason, it is natural to

suppose that you would not refuse to give it. If it was a bad one, — and your silence seems to prove that, — your grandfather ought to know of the matter. It would be poor kindness in me to let you persist in doing wrong, — even help you to deceive your grandfather!"

"I am not deceiving him," Violet began angrily; but checked herself abruptly. For conscience cried out, Was it not deception, after all, to hide something that he had a right to know, and act as if nothing had happened, when something had been done that she knew would displease him? It was impossible to justify herself, and yet she could not bear to acknowledge Sydney's transgression.

"I promised him I would not tell," she thought, distressfully, "and if I do, how mean it will be! Grandpapa will never rest till he has the boy punished: he will make me tell his name and everything; and then suppose I should ever see him again. How he will despise me! O, I can't, I must not tell."

She hid her face in her hands and cried; it was the only expression she could make of the inward struggle that so distressed her; and Mrs. Weldon, who had not the remotest idea of the real state

of the case, looked on at her emotion with pity and amazement that were mingled with painful doubts and suspicions. There was no way of even making a guess at what had really happened, no single wrong thing that she could fix upon in her mind as possible for Violet to have been concerned in. And yet all this desire for secrecy, this obstinate refusal to explain, this passionate distress at the thought of her grandfather being told, — how could they be accounted for if she was perfectly innocent?

It was altogether a painful mystery, and to a person both conscientious and kind-hearted, as Mrs. Weldon was, loving her pupil tenderly, and yet compelled by her sense of duty to be severe, the situation was perplexing in the extreme. She watched the sobbing girl sorrowfully for several minutes, pondering what she might best say. She went to her at last, and drew her hands away from her face.

"You must not cry so, my dear," she said, resolutely. "All this sobbing is unnecessary if you have done nothing wrong, and if you have it will not mend it. Dry your tears now, and listen to me. I must speak to you plainly."

But to bid Violet dry her tears was one thing,

to make her do it, another. In her short, happy life, so filled with affection, and so sheltered from trouble, she had seldom had occasion to shed tears. But when they once began to flow, it was no easy matter to check them, especially in a dilemma that seemed so hopeless as the present. So she continued to cry, uncontrollably; and Mrs. Weldon grew more and more perplexed and unhappy.

It was useless, she felt, to make any further attempts now to compel an explanation, and she was almost as unwilling as Violet herself to bring the matter to Colonel Schuyler.

"I will give you one more opportunity," she said at last, after a few minutes' painful consideration. "You know I do not wish to bring you into trouble with your grandfather, and I will not go to him now until you have had more time to make up your mind. But if you do not tell me everything that I ought to know before to-morrow afternoon, I shall insist upon your going with me to the library; and there your grandfather will have to decide upon your conduct."

She waited a few moments for an answer, but none came. Then she opened her desk and began to write letters, and Violet, finding herself

tacitly dismissed, ran away to her own room, where she cried herself sick, and was unable to come down to dinner. Colonel Schuyler, as it happened, dined away from home that day; so Mrs. Weldon took a solitary meal, with no cheerful thoughts to atone for her lack of company.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WRONG CONFESSED.

THE real culprits, meanwhile, had made their way home without any difficulty. When they had got a safe distance from Colonel Schuyler's grounds, and discovered that there was really no one in pursuit, Sydney gave an account of his adventure, to the unbounded amazement of his companions.

"Joe Bingham says that dog's a real blood-hound," exclaimed Charlie. "I can't see why he didn't tear you to pieces. If I had known what was going on — good Lord!"

He stopped, quite overcome with the bare idea.

"Don't swear," said Frank, coolly. "It's all over now, and nobody's hurt. I say, what a bully girl it was, though, and what luck that she happened to be around!"

"You may say that," Sydney retorted. "I

wonder what would have become of me if she hadn't come when she did. I was half choked with that great beast lying on me, though he didn't bite, I'll say that for him. He only held me down."

"It's just a miracle, nothing shorter," said Charlie, unable to get over his astonishment. "I don't know how it was, but I felt sure something was going to happen, when you kept dawdling so. I was never so miserable in my life; and I can tell you what — it's the last time I shall go in for *this* sort of a lark. It don't pay."

"Shake hands on that," Sydney responded, promptly. "It's the first time with me, and it's the last, you bet. I had a pretty good chance to get ashamed of myself to-night, and I wouldn't feel so cheap again for all the fruit that ever grew. As to that bag of plums, you and Frank can do what you like with my share. *I* don't want 'em."

"O, pooh! that's nonsense," Frank exclaimed. "What's the use of making such a fuss over a little bit of fun, when it's all over and done, and nobody hurt? It's all stuff about your not taking

your share of the plums. You will take 'em, and eat 'em, too."

"Not if I know it," was Sydney's determined answer. "I wish I could put 'em back on the tree — I'd almost risk the dog again for the sake of doing it. But if I can't do that, I can keep them out of my mouth, at any rate; and I will, too. I wouldn't eat one of them for a horse and saddle."

"That's all highfalutin nonsense," Frank returned, in disgust. And Charlie protested equally against such a ridiculous notion, as he called it. But Sydney was not to be moved from his determination. The idea of eating any of the stolen fruit — although it was certainly stolen for that purpose, and he himself had been the thief — was altogether disgusting to him now. He could not forget the look and tone with which Violet had said, —

"It is not a gentlemanly thing, to say the least of it, to be robbing orchards."

Neither could he forget the suffocating sense of shame which he felt when he lay at the dog's mercy; the humiliation of owing his release to a girl; the miserable dread of being openly disgraced, from which she had delivered him. To

eat any of those plums now would have been a meanness worse than the stealing of them, he thought; and he stuck to his resolution, in spite of all that his companions could say.

It ended in their carrying off the bag, — Frank declaring that *he* was not "too virtuous for cakes and ale," — while Sydney stole into his father's house again, empty-handed as he had left it, and wishing with all his heart that he had never left it at all.

He was more fortunate than Violet in his return, for no one had missed him, or dreamed of his absence; and, except for his own uncomfortable consciousness of what had happened, there was nothing at all to disturb him.

His father and mother were just as kind as usual at the breakfast table next morning; Laura rattled on without the slightest suspicion of his having a secret; and Archie, and Fan, and Flossy — all the little fry — admired their big brother as serenely as ever.

"Have a corn muffin for your lunch?" said Laura, pushing away her breakfast plate, and looking about the table to see what was most desirable for a lunch basket. "I'll butter you some while they're nice and hot — shall I?"

"I can do it myself," he answered, rather ungraciously, with the feeling that he didn't deserve any special attention. "You needn't trouble."

"I don't intend to," she retorted, opening the muffins, and shutting them up again with a lump of butter to melt inside. "Flossy, run and fetch me his lunch box, that's a darling."

And Flossy dropped her own muffin, half eaten, while she ran willingly to do the errand; little Fan proffered contributions of bread and butter and cold ham, and Mrs. Guilford suggested apple pie and cheese from the pantry.

"If they only knew," Sydney thought, remorsefully, "how little I deserve to be waited on and coddled!"

But they did not know, and he had to put up with it, even to Archie's toddling off, and coming back with a big purple plum squeezed up in his little fat hand, which he insisted upon adding to the lunch.

"Murphy give it to Archie boy; Archie boy keep it for budder Tidney — nice big p'um," he announced with his little complacent air; and it was impossible to refuse it without hurting the dear little fellow's feelings, though Sydney thought

he had never felt so small in his life before as when he accepted it.

The sense of shame haunted him all day long. He had no means of knowing the trouble he had made for Violet, and never dreamed, indeed, that for the sake of shielding him she would subject herself to blame. But he could not put aside his uncomfortable remembrance of the humiliating position in which he had been placed. To have to owe his release from actual bodily danger to a girl, and, worse still, to have to accept her promise that she would hide his fault, and save him from its consequences — that stung his pride, and made his face burn with shame twenty times during the day.

Frank and Charlie could not enter into his feelings, and were provoked with him, Frank especially, for "making such a fuss about nothing," when he again, and angrily, refused the fruit which they urged upon him at recess.

"What the dickens are we going to do with the stuff?" Charlie said. "*We* can't use it up, and it's a pity to have it spoil on our hands."

"Who cares?" answered Sydney, savagely; "let it spoil; pitch it into the river; give it to Micky Flinn's pig — what do you come bother-

ing me about it for, when I told you I never wanted to hear of it again?"

"You're a nice fellow to take all the fun out of a thing," Frank grumbled. "What fools we were, Charlie, to let him have anything to do with it! I'll know better next time, you bet I will."

"And so will I," retorted Sydney. "You may bet high on that."

And he stalked off, more than ever angry and disgusted with himself, and gave away the best part of the lunch which Laura had put up so nicely, to a couple of tramps that happened to be plodding past the play-ground just then. He had no appetite for food, and no heart for play; and it was impossible to study with his thoughts so distracted. So the day went by in a very dismal and profitless fashion; and he came home again cross, tired, and generally "out of sorts."

Laura, on the contrary, was in the best of spirits, for a piece of unexpected good fortune had happened to "Ambo." Mrs. Delancy had offered them the use of the school-room for the fair, and had promised several important contributions, in addition to her personal help in arrangements.

"All the ice-cream, for one thing," said Laura, triumphantly. "Just think of that, Sydney! You know what quantities of ice-cream people always eat at fairs; and then she says there is no reason why we shouldn't have a floral temple, and make a great deal of money by selling bouquets. She will fix it all beautifully for us, just as they do in New York fairs."

"And who'll buy the flowers, I wonder?" asked Sydney, contemptuously. "As if everybody didn't have flowers of their own!"

"No matter," Laura returned, merrily. "The floral temple will be exceedingly ornamental, at any rate, and we shall sell the bouquets cheap. Lots of people will buy them, you'll see. And, O, Syd, the nicest of all is, she says it's an excellent thing to use the money for Janie; and she thinks we will have enough to make a fair start, and if Janie improves, and it turns out well, she will help us to keep her at the institute as long as it's necessary. Now isn't that splendid? I say, Syd, isn't it worth while to be an honorary member of such a flourishing society?"

Laura was so brimming over with her happy excitement, that she did not see at first how en-

tirely unsympathetic Sydney was. She seized him by the shoulders, and spun him round in an impromptu waltz, and did not discover until he shook her off, more roughly than was necessary, that he was not as pleased as she was with so much good news.

"I wish you would let me alone!" he snapped out, so sharply that Laura opened her eyes with amazement.

"Why, Sydney! what have I done to you? How can you speak so crossly?" she exclaimed, hurt and surprised.

"You are always so rude! Do you suppose I want to be pulled to pieces because you've lost your wits about that ridiculous fair? I'm sick of the whole concern."

And he slammed out of the room, leaving Laura utterly confounded by such an uncalled-for outburst. It was so unlike him usually that she was frightened for him, even more than hurt or offended on her own account.

"Something has gone wrong; that is plain," she thought. "He would never treat me so if he had not been dreadfully put out, some way. I wish I knew what was the matter."

It checked all her merriment, and made her

cross in turn to Flossy, who was full of curiosity about the floral temple, and asked questions until Laura fairly drove her away with "short answers." Whereupon she went to her mother and complained that "everybody was cross;" a wholesale statement, that Mrs. Guilford declined to accept without further evidence. But she found it borne out, to a certain extent, by the dull faces which Sydney and Laura brought, contrary to custom, to the merry tea-table.

Sydney did not feel any happier for having been rude and unkind to his sister, and Laura's anxiety increased when she saw how silent and sullen he was at the table. She had her little sense of injury, too — "*I* haven't vexed him, and he needn't treat *me* so!" which made her determine that she wouldn't speak first.

So, as far as they were concerned, the tea was rather unsociable. The little ones chattered as usual, however, and the doctor had a funny story to tell about a Bobtown kitten, which had tormented him for an hour, whining and mewing somewhere near him, but utterly invisible. He looked all about the carriage, under the seat, and outside, to see if it had been tied on behind by some of the mischievous Flinn tribe. But find

it he couldn't; till at last a sudden inspiration made him thrust his hand into his coat pocket, and there was the kitten!

"Some of Katie Flinn's capers," laughed the doctor. "I'm just as sure of it as she would be of a whipping if her mother found it out. She'll shake in her shoes the next time she sees me."

"You won't tell her mother, though," cried Fan, confidently.

"Why not? Don't you think she deserves a whipping?"

"No, indeed," put in Flossy, saucily. "You don't, either, papa. I heard you say yourself, little girls oughtn't *never* to be whipped."

"I'll have to change my mind some day, for your especial benefit," her father retorted, "if you don't take better care of your negatives."

"What's negatives?" Flossy queried, undisturbed by such a prospect.

"And where's the kitten?" Fan put in, eager for the rest of the story. "Why didn't you bring it to me?"

Between correcting Flossy's grammar, and telling Fan of a little sick girl, who had been made happy by the presentation of the kitten, the doc-

tor had no time to notice how silent the two older ones were. Mrs. Guilford was more observant; and after tea she took occasion to speak to Laura.

"Is anything wrong with you and Sydney? I thought you did not either of you look very happy to-night," she said, as they stood alone for a minute in the dining-room.

"I'm sure I don't know what ails Sydney," Laura answered, promptly. "I was telling him what Mrs. Delancy said, and, just for a frolic, I took hold of him and whirled him round, — as we often play with each other, you know, mamma, — and he got angry all at once."

"Perhaps you hurt him," her mother suggested.

"O, no, mamma; that was impossible. I couldn't have hurt him, and I had not said the least thing to vex him, either. But he pushed me off so roughly, and said I was rude, and I had lost my senses about the fair, and he was sick of it all. And so he went out of the room, and he hasn't spoken to me since."

There was a little hurt tone in Laura's words but no temper, and no exaggeration. Mrs. Guilford saw that she had stated the case fairly, and

it puzzled her as much as it had surprised Laura. Sydney was not apt to take offence at play, even if it were a little rough; and she could only account for his conduct by supposing that something had happened at school to arouse his temper; something which was no trifle, too, for he was not naturally hot-tempered or quarrelsome.

She watched him quietly through the evening, without seeming to do so, and she grew more convinced that something was amiss with him. It was a chilly September evening, and a bright little wood fire had been kindled in the parlor. It crackled and blazed away in the cheeriest fashion, and the rest gathered around it, admiring the dancing flames, and enjoying the pleasant warmth, as people always do with the first fire of the season. But Sydney kept aloof, and bent his head over a book at the other side of the room.

"The fire was too hot, it made his head ache," he said; and by and by he slipped away, and went up stairs to his own room, not because of the heat or a headache, but because he felt so ill at ease and unhappy, that he could not bear to stay where the light, bright room and cheerful talk were in such contrast with himself. He sat

down by the window and watched the moon shining round and full above the trees: it shone just so last night, when the dog flew at him in the orchard; and Sydney laid his head on the window-sill and groaned as he thought of it.

Some boys, reading this, will laugh at him, perhaps, and wonder how he could worry himself so about such a small matter. Frank Fisher, though he was not a bad boy himself, as boys go, considered him "a muff" for taking it to heart. "It was a pretty rough scrape, but he got jolly well out of it; why does he make a muss about it now?" he observed, philosophically. And Frank himself would never have looked upon it in any other light than as a good story to tell by and by, when the risk of telling it was over.

But Sydney had been brought up with different ideas. There was no reservation in favor of plum trees or pear trees in the eighth commandment; and, though he had suffered himself for a while to believe it was no stealing, he could not help coming back now to his first convictions. He had been a thief, sneaking through the dark to take what did not belong to him, and what he

would not have dared to meddle with in daylight; he had been caught in the act by a dog; he had been released by a girl, who, though she pitied him, must of course despise him in her heart; and now he was at home again, acting a lie to everybody, and taking kindness which he didn't deserve, and wouldn't get, if the truth was known.

These were the simple facts of the case; and, to a boy whose home training and influence had all been based upon the principle of uncompromising truth and honesty, they furnished reason enough for shame and regret. He felt the burden of a guilty secret, and it was a most unusual and disagreeable burden. Nobody had secrets at the brown cottage; the whole atmosphere was one of mutual confidence and sympathy; and he felt himself shut out from the rest by a consciousness which they could not share. Confession of the whole matter would have been a relief; but that seemed hardly fair to Frank and Charlie; and, besides, what good would it do, now that all was over, and no help for it, to make his mother unhappy by telling her? No, it was better to keep it to himself now, he thought; and

just as he reached this conclusion, the door opened softly, and his mother came in.

She had left Laura playing chess with her father in the parlor, and gone up to the nursery, where Archie was already asleep, to give Fan and Flossy the "kiss in bed," without which they were never willing to shut their eyes. Sydney's room lay across the hall; and, having missed him from the parlor, she went to look for him, and to find out what had gone wrong with him. For she was afraid that some trouble lay under his rudeness to Laura, and his dejected attitude, as she came into the room, convinced her that she was not mistaken.

He did not hear the door open, and he gave a nervous start as she laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Don't be alarmed," with her loving smile. "It is only mamma, come to look for a runaway. Have you really a headache, dear?"

"Yes, mamma — and a heartache, too."

The words came out involuntarily. He had not intended to say anything like that, and he was frightened as soon as he had spoken. But he could not take it back, for she answered at once, —

"I was afraid of it, dear. I have seen in your face all the evening that something was wrong. What is it all about?"

"Don't ask me," he said, hastily. "I didn't mean to tell you — please don't ask me any questions, mamma."

"But how can I help it? If you have a heart-ache, as you say, your mother is the one to cure it. I must ask you questions till I know what the trouble is."

"I oughtn't to have said anything about it," he replied, dejectedly. "If you insist upon it, I shall have to tell you. But it will only make you unhappy, mamma."

"I insist upon it, at all events. Whatever makes my children unhappy, it is my right to know," was her answer. And, in spite of everything, Sydney felt glad that she would compel him to tell. It was a relief already, and still more so when the whole story was poured out; he sitting on the floor at her feet, with his head in her lap, and her gentle hand soothing with its mere touch the throbbing pain in his temples.

She did not take it away, and her voice lost none of its tenderness, even when she knew what he had done, though Sydney knew very well that

she was not indifferent, or inclined to make light of the matter.

"I am very glad you have told me all this yourself," was the first thing she said. "If I had found it out in any other way, it would have been a great deal harder to bear."

"And it's hard enough as it is, mamma — isn't it?" he put in, sorrowfully.

"Yes, it hurts me, Sydney; I can't deny that. I would never have supposed that you could let yourself forget so easily things that you have been taught from your cradle. You have often heard your father say —"

"O, mamma, I know," he interrupted, with keen distress. "My father has said everything — so have you — that ought to have made me know better. And I did know better all the while — that's the worst of it!"

He buried his face in her dress to hide the tears that he could not control, and she drew him closer to her, pitying and loving him the more for the pain that she knew he ought to suffer. It was hard to feel that he had deliberately planned, and deceitfully carried out, such a piece of folly and wickedness — the boy she had felt such pride and confidence in! But it might have

been worse — so much worse! and through and above all the pain which his fault caused, her heart swelled with thankfulness for his confession and repentance.

It was a long, tender, earnest talk that they had together, while the moonlight lay white on the floor, and the shadows of the rustling leaves outside danced to and fro upon it. The game of chess was finished, and the doctor took his new magazine, while Laura went up to bed, wondering greatly what mamma and Sydney were doing so long, and if anything dreadful really had happened. She longed to go into his room, where she heard the murmur of their voices; but she was too well bred to intrude upon a private conversation, and she had to content herself to wait till she should be taken into confidence.

Sydney, meanwhile, was trying to make up his mind to do a very difficult thing. His mother had told him that as Colonel Schuyler was the person who had been injured, he was the one to whom confession and apology were due. His own conscience told him the same thing, but it was no easy matter to accept the conclusion with its consequences. Telling his mother, alone in the moonlight, with her gentle hand upon his head,

and her loving heart to pity and forgive, even while it blamed him, was an easy matter by comparison. To walk up to Colonel Schuyler, whom he only knew by Charlie's description, as a "crusty old fellow, that looked cross as Ajax," and say to him, "I've been robbing your orchard, sir," — that was a different thing. He did not know how to bring himself to it.

But one cannot escape the consequences of a fault committed. They must be accepted in one shape or another; and so his mother told him.

"You have done wrong, and the consciousness of it makes you unhappy. It always will do so until you have made what amends you can by confession. Remember that a fault confessed is half redressed; and the relief to your own mind, from the sense of guilt, and the dread of discovery, will more than balance the humiliation of confession."

"I don't think there is any danger of my being found out," said Sydney, evading the question. "She promised — the girl, you know — not to speak of it. Of course I didn't ask her. She promised of her own accord."

"It was very generous of her," Mrs. Guilford answered, "though I hardly think she had a

right to keep such a secret. And it seems hardly possible that she will be able to. Suppose she was seen by some of the family when she went back to the house, — and it is very likely that she was, — how could she help betraying you? She would have to account for being out of doors at such an hour; and, with the best intentions to protect you, I don't really see how she could. You have told her your name, and if she is questioned about it, it will be the most natural thing for her to tell the whole story. At this very moment Colonel Schuyler may know that his orchard was robbed, and that Sydney Guilford was the boy who did it."

This was a new view of the case to Sydney, and a new danger that he had not at all apprehended. He had only remembered, gratefully and admiringly, Violet's generous kindness, and it had never occurred to him that she might be compelled, for her own sake, to tell what she had done. It suggested a possibility that, more than any other consideration, helped him to accept his mother's unpalatable advice. Violet might be in trouble on his account; her grandfather might have seen her, and been angry; perhaps she had refused, in spite of all, to tell his name, and at

this very time she might be in disgrace for keeping her promise.

He could not tell how near the truth this random supposition was, but the mere thought of it sent the blood to his cheeks, and made his heart beat faster. Whatever happened to him, if there was the shadow of a possibility that Violet would be blamed, he must prevent that at once.

"I will go to-morrow and tell him all about it," he decided, without a moment's hesitation. "You are always right, mamma, and I will do just what you tell me. I only wish I had come to you a little sooner."

"I wish you had;" and she kissed him, compassionately. "It will be hard for you, my boy, but the lesson will do you good. You will not be so easily persuaded, against your conscience, another time."

"No, that I won't!" he exclaimed, promptly. "I shall know how to 'say no' the next time. But, mamma," with a sudden recollection, "ought I to let it out that Frank and Charlie were in it? That seems a sort of mean thing to do."

"Did you tell 'Violet' that they were with you?"

"O, no; and she didn't seem to suspect there

was any one else. They were not in the orchard at all, you know."

"Then there will be no occasion to speak of them, I suppose; though it is hardly fair, either, that you should bear all the blame."

"It doesn't make much difference," he said, with a sigh of resignation. "If I've got to face the music at all, I'd just as soon do it alone. They'd make a great row about it if they knew, and they wouldn't consent; so I think I had better not tell them that I mean to see the colonel."

"Are you sure you could not persuade them to go with you?"

Sydney shook his head. "Not much. You see, mamma, they don't think it's any harm, and they would laugh at the notion of going up there to get blown up by the old colonel, and then doing the same sort of thing again when they got a good chance. You don't know how boys talk."

"I am glad there is one boy, at least, who knows the difference between right and wrong," said Mrs. Guilford. "It would make me unhappy, more unhappy than I can tell you, Sydney, if I could think you would ever come to make light of any dishonesty. It is the only comfort

I have in this affair, that you are really ashamed and sorry."

"I'm glad you can find any comfort at all in it, mamma," was Sydney's penitent answer; "I'm certainly ashamed and sorry enough, if that gives you any, but I wish it was only I that had to be ashamed."

"Well, we will not talk of it any more," she said, gently. "There is just one thing I want to remind you of — you can guess what I mean?"

He knew, by her reverent, earnest tone, and bent his head, silently consenting.

"Every fault that has to seek forgiveness from men, needs it still more from God. It is His laws that have first been broken, and only His pardon that can really free us from the sin."

"Yes, mamma, I know that," — very low, and sorrowfully, as she paused for a moment.

"Well, then, we will say our prayers together, and ask for this forgiveness first."

And her tender tone and touch drew him to his knees beside her, while she prayed for him earnestly, fervently, out of the very depths of her loving, mother's heart. She asked pardon and peace for this transgression, that he might be "cleansed from all sin," and grow wise and

strong to resist temptation; wise through seeking help and guidance from the One whose helping hand is always ready if we will but see it, and strong through knowing his own weakness to do anything good, or escape anything evil, without His grace. She asked for the sons of other mothers, that they might not be left in temptation, but taught to choose good instead of evil; and she thanked God that He had kept *her* son, "that was so dear," from the worse sin of deceit and falsehood, and led him to confession and repentance.

Her voice trembled with tears through the whispered pleading, and Sydney was utterly broken down. He could not answer her good-night kiss and "God bless you," for his heart was too full. But his mother knew that he would not soon forget the impression of this hour.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WRONG REDRESSED.

IT was afternoon the next day before Colonel Schuyler came home. He had gone to New York, and been detained unexpectedly over night. For the first time in her life, Violet was glad of his absence, and for the first time in her life, when she came to meet him after a journey, her step was slow, and her face had no welcome in it.

She tried to smile and look glad, but her heavy eyes and pale cheeks spoiled the effort; and her grandfather, knowing the little face so well in all its changes, saw at a glance that something was wrong.

"You're not looking well; what's the matter?" he asked, with prompt anxiety; and Violet's heart sank, for she knew now that there was no escape for her. Once he began to question her, what could she do? And what could she do in

any case? alas! for her governess would surely keep her word. She could only falter out, —

"I had a headache, grandpapa, and I haven't quite got rid of it."

"Young heads have no business with headaches," he returned. "Come into the library after I am dressed, and tell me what you have been doing to get a headache. Perhaps I have something to show you that will drive it away."

He kissed her, and went up stairs to change his dress, that was dusty with railroad travel. Violet looked after him till he was out of sight, then turned to Mrs. Weldon with an imploring look. But that lady shook her head.

"There are three questions that must be answered — to me or to your grandfather," she said, decidedly. "Where did you go that night? What did you do? Whom did you promise not to tell? You can still take your choice whether you will answer them to me or to him. There is time enough before he comes down."

"But will you promise not to tell him?" exclaimed Violet, desperately. "If I answer to you, will you promise never to let anybody know?"

"No, my dear. I cannot consent to make any such promise. What I do afterwards must depend

altogether upon the nature of the thing you have done. If I find it something that your grandfather ought to know, I shall surely tell him."

Mrs. Weldon spoke coldly, perhaps rather harshly; but she was surprised and displeased at Violet's obstinacy, and had brought herself to the belief that there must be some serious fault at the bottom of it — something, indeed, which ought not to be concealed from her grandfather; and therefore she was not willing to make the slightest compromise.

Violet turned away from her in a sort of sullen despair, half angry, half hurt, and wholly hopeless. "What is the use of telling it twice?" she said to herself; and without answering her governess, she went past her into the library, to wait for her grandfather. Mrs. Weldon followed her, fully determined now to speak to Colonel Schuyler; and so the two sat there silently until he came down.

He had a large book in his hand, which he opened as he laid it on the study table. "Come here, Puss," — taking a seat in his arm-chair, and drawing her to his knee. "See what these pictures will do for your headache."

It was a collection of charming "studies" for

crayon drawings: the "Undine," "L'Indigence," "Evangeline," the "Mater Dolorosa," the "Dead Christ;" twenty more beautiful and familiar "heads," with a number of lovely sketches besides; — bits of landscape; groups of children, playing, reading, sleeping; studies of flowers and fruit; and bewitching images of fairies, pixies, and "water-babies," with all their fanciful surroundings. A book of treasures to Violet, who so delighted in everything picturesque and artistic; but alas! spoiled for her now. She turned over the leaves listlessly; there was none of the animation, the sparkling delight, which her grandfather had expected; and he watched her with a surprised and disappointed expression.

"There is something more than a headache here," he said, presently, pushing the book away, and looking straight into Violet's eyes. "What is the reason, Puss, that you are so pale and dull, not pleased with what always made you happy before, not even glad to see me at home again? Come! let us have the whole story."

But Violet dropped her eyelids, and had not a word to say. Her heart sank down like a leaden weight. Her grandfather looked at Mrs. Weldon.

"Is she in disgrace?" he asked, a little sharply.

"What has she been doing, that she can't speak for herself?"

"That is what I have been trying for two days to find out," Mrs. Weldon answered, gravely.

"Two days! There was nothing amiss when I went away yesterday morning?" he questioned.

"Only that at one o'clock in the morning Violet had not yet been in bed. And when I found her coming up from below stairs, she refused absolutely to tell me where she had been, or what she had been doing, away from her room at that hour of night. I did not think it best to bring the matter to you immediately: I waited, hoping that I could induce her to explain her conduct; but I have to confess that I have entirely failed. She has given her promise to some one — I have no means of knowing who it is — not to tell; and this is all I can discover about it. I am very sorry," Mrs. Weldon added, regretfully, "to bring Violet into trouble, or to give you the impression that she has been doing wrong. But I could not feel justified in keeping silence."

"Certainly not: you have done quite right."

Violet felt, though she did not see, the stern look that came over his face as he said this. She knew the close-set lips, the cold, determined eyes;

and her own drooped lower, till the long eyelashes almost touched her cheek. But her grandfather did not choose to let them stay hidden so.

"Look up," he said, in a tone that compelled obedience; and Violet had to lift the blue eyes, full of pitiful perplexity and distress, to the judge before her.

"Now, then, I want to understand this very singular story. You did not go to bed — night before last, was it? — till after midnight. Why was that, to begin with?"

Violet explained it, tremulously; the new book, the moonlight; she was not sleepy; she did not think grandpapa would be angry.

"Very well; but why did you go down stairs?"

"I heard a noise, and I wanted to see what it was."

"Bruno growling, she told me," Mrs. Weldon interposed.

"Did you see?" disregarding the interruption. "What was the noise? Who made it?"

"Bruno, grandpapa, — partly," Violet faltered, her eyelids drooping again.

"Look at me! Bruno *partly*, — well, what else?"

"O, please, grandpapa" — Violet clasped her

hands in distress, — "don't ask me any more questions; don't make me tell you. I promised I wouldn't!"

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Weldon. "It is just as I said, you see. Now do you wonder at my anxiety, when she confesses to so much as this, and refuses to explain anything more?"

"She will not refuse to explain it to me," said Colonel Schuyler, with a quiet emphasis. "Go on, Violet. What else did you hear?"

"O, grandpapa, *please!*" she repeated, with still more pitiful pleading in her eyes and voice; but he was unmoved by it.

"You only convince me that I ought to make you speak," he said. "All this distress and reluctance proves that there is something which needs to be investigated. I insist upon your answering, unless you wish me to believe that you have been committing some fault that is very grave indeed," he added, with a searching look.

Violet's pale face flushed under it. "I have not done anything wicked," she said, proudly. "I wonder how you can think so."

"Because you compel me to think everything. Why do you make such a mystery of it, if there is nothing wrong?"

"I said I wouldn't tell," she murmured.

"And *I* say you must tell," he exclaimed, sternly. "First of all, I want to know who was the person you promised, and then what the thing was that was not to be told. It is folly to think that I will allow such things to go unaccounted for. I insist upon your answering me fully, and at once; you have trifled with the matter long enough."

Poor Violet! There was no resisting any longer when he took this severe tone. She cowered down, frightened and miserable, not daring to disobey the stern command, and yet dreading, with an exaggerated terror, the consequences of her revelation. She had been kept in such a state of worry and excitement, that the whole thing had assumed a magnified importance to her. Her own share in it would be severely condemned and punished, she felt sure; and as for the poor boy, something dreadful would happen, of necessity. If grandpapa was so angry already, what would he be when she had told him everything!

It seemed almost impossible to shape her frightened, confused ideas into any intelligent speech. She began nervously, and her lips trem-

bled so that the words would not come; the tears sprang to her eyes; her hands shook with the repressed excitement.

Colonel Schuyler could not but pity her distress, but he was inexorable in his purpose. "You need not tremble so," he said, more gently. "There can surely be no reason for you to dread telling me the truth, Violet. Compose yourself now, and speak out honestly. I want to be satisfied — I dare say I shall be — that it is nothing very terrible, after all."

The kind tone gave her a little courage, and she opened her lips again; but before the words could pass there was a sudden knock at the door. Colonel Schuyler made an impatient exclamation, but he answered, "Come in!" and Owen, the waiter, made his appearance.

"If you please, sir, there's a young gentleman wants to see you, sir."

"Who is it? What's his name?" asked the colonel, shortly.

"Didn't give it to me, sir; looks like one of the young gentlemen from the military."

"Go and ask him for his name; and tell him that I am very much engaged just at present."

Owen went away, leaving the door half open,

so that they heard his voice in parley with the visitor at the hall door.

"Tell Colonel Schuyler," was the response to his message, in boyish accents, "that my name is Sydney Guilford; and if he is engaged I can wait as long as he likes. But I want to see him this afternoon very much indeed."

"I wonder why," the colonel muttered, in an undertone. "I have no acquaintance with Mr. Sydney Guilford; but I suppose I must give him a hearing." And he put Violet off his knee, where she had sat so uneasily all this time, and went to the door just as Owen returned to report the message.

"Stay here till I come back, and be ready to speak to me when I do come," he said to her, and left the room, leaving Violet thrilling all over with a new excitement. Sydney Guilford! That was the boy who had robbed the orchard! What could bring him here now, unless — unless — and the poor little heart throbbed with a sudden sense of relief — he had come to confess, himself, what he had done? That would be good news indeed; too good, entirely, to be true, the poor child thought, with a sigh. And yet, what else could it be? She sat in a tremble of hope and

fear, straining her ears to catch a chance word; but her grandfather had shut the door, and no sound penetrated.

Sydney, on the other side of it, was trying to screw his courage up to meet his fate bravely; but he felt a very sick sensation when he saw the colonel advancing to meet him. He did not see the "goggles" that Charlie Cox had described, nor the "knobby cane;" but the tall, white-haired, dignified old gentleman was much more imposing even than the "crusty old fellow, cross as Ajax," that he had expected to en
not reassured by the rather curt tone
colonel greeted him, and inquired his business; but, "sink or swim," he had made up his mind to do it, and so he plunged at once *in medias res*. Owen had gone away, and there was no one else in sight; the stone terrace was as good a place as any other for the confession, and, standing there in the warm autumn sunshine, he stammered out, in some confused, shame-faced fashion, what had happened close by, in the moonlight, two nights ago.

If it had not been for what had passed before, the colonel would have found it difficult to understand the jumble that Sydney made of the

orchard, and the dog, the moonlight, and Violet; but the previous scene was a key to this, as this was an unlooked-for commentary and explanation to that. In a flash poor little Violet's mystery was revealed, and her grandfather understood now completely her double perplexity and trouble. It was all clear to him — how her generous impulse had led her to help the boy's escape, and her sense of honor had constrained her to keep his secret, even while it subjected her to such painful doubts and questionings.

It was so great a relief to him to discover, at such an opportune moment, her innocence of any real fault, that his first impulse was actually to say, "Thank you," to the culprit, who stood before him with downcast looks, awaiting the expected sharp rebuke. But he recollected himself in time, and bent his brows to a sterner expression.

"This is a nice story you bring me, sir; what am I to think of it?" was the first comment.

"I don't know, sir, except that it's true," was Sydney's dejected answer.

"Good character you give of yourself, prowling round people's houses in the night."

"Yes, sir," said Sydney, more downcast still.

"And no more sense of shame than to come here in open daylight, and tell me of it to my face!"

"It wasn't that — it's — I think you are mistaken, sir," stammered Sydney, flushing up to his forehead, and thinking this "a little too rough on a fellow."

"Mistaken, am I? Well, what do you expect me to think, when a boy walks up to me, audaciously, and tells me he has robbed my orchard, and my dog has caught him in the act, and my granddaughter has let him go free, when by good right he deserved a flogging?"

"You can think he has come back to get it, sir," returned the boy, drawing himself up proudly. "I know I deserve to be punished, and I shan't shirk it. You can do what you like to me."

"You would rather be flogged than not, I suppose;" and the colonel's frown relaxed, while a smile lurked in the corner of his mouth. "You have really come here, then, on purpose to confess a fault, and tell me you are sorry for it?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I'm trying to do."

"The curious part of it is, what makes you

sorry? I suppose you've done the same thing a dozen times before."

"No, sir; I never did anything of the sort before; never in my life," Sydney replied, promptly.

"Ah! and why have you done it now, then?"

"Because," Sydney began, and stopped, confusedly.

"Some other fellows were going to have a lark, and invited you to join them?" said the colonel, with a shrewd interrogation. "You didn't know how to say no?"

"I didn't say that, sir," exclaimed Sydney, quickly.

"No, but I observe that you don't deny it," the colonel rejoined. "You need not be afraid; I shan't ask you to tell tales on your friends, but I would like to know simply for my own satisfaction if I have guessed right. Were you the only boy in the orchard that night?"

"Yes, sir, I was the only one in the orchard," Sydney answered, but with a certain reservation in his tone that the colonel at once detected.

"You are not answering me frankly; and if you try to deceive me with half truths, your con-

fession is not worth much. It might as well have been left unmade," he said, with dignity; and Sydney was obliged, in self-defence, to acknowledge that he was not alone.

"There were two boys outside of the fence, sir. I didn't want to say anything about them, at all, and I hope you won't ask me their names. If you do, I can't tell them to you."

"Don't be afraid; I have no use for their names," the colonel answered; "and no opinion of a boy who betrays his mates. You have told me all I want to know about them this time. If they try the same trick again, I shall know how to find them out for myself. The question is now, What is to be done with you?"

It was just the question that Sydney had speculated and pondered upon all day long; he was very anxious to have it answered, but had no suggestions of his own to offer.

"You are quite aware, I suppose," the colonel continued, coolly, "that I could do several very disagreeable things. I could have you arrested, if I chose to take law on my side; or I could make complaint to the principal of your academy; or I could take lynch law, and make Owen thrash you on the spot. I was thrashed myself,

when I was a boy, for something of the same sort; and it was the best thing that could have happened to me."

"Very well, sir," said Sydney, with an effort, choking down the bitter pill to his pride. "If you choose to have me flogged, I've got nothing to say."

He did not believe the colonel had any such intention, but it was no less humiliating to have the prospect set before him. The flogging itself would have been less painful than the keen shame which he felt, and which pictured itself so plainly on his countenance, that Colonel Schuyler could but pity him at last. He watched the downcast eyes, the flushed face, and quivering lips, that betrayed the struggle within, and he could not help a feeling of respect for the boy's manly self-control, and an admiration for the honest principle which had evidently influenced him to make the confession, and now kept him patient under its unpleasant consequences. "He has been punished enough already," was his mental conclusion, and he put it into words without keeping the boy longer in suspense.

"I think you are really sorry for your fault, my boy," he said, so kindly that Sydney looked

up with quick surprise; "and you have proved your willingness to make amends for it. I hold by the old adage, that 'a wrong confessed is half redressed,' and so we'll consider the matter settled. I don't believe you will put yourself in such an uncomfortable position again."

"No, sir! that I never will," was the eager response, full of grateful relief. "I don't know how to thank you for being so kind —"

"I'll take it for granted," interrupted the colonel, cheerfully. "Don't say any more about it, but go home and tell your mother. And the next time anybody wants you to do a thing that you suspect to be wrong, say, NO, in capital letters."

Sydney's heart was as light as a feather as he ran down the stone steps, and crossed the broad lawn again. He was so happy that he whistled a tune as he went, and Bruno growled at him in the distance. But what did he care for Bruno now? The burden was lifted from his heart, and he had no longer anything to be afraid or ashamed of. The world seemed full of sunshine and gladness all at once, now that this dreaded interview was so happily over. There was only one thing to regret — that he had not caught a

glimpse of Violet. Her handkerchief was in his pocket, in a neat little parcel; and he had intended to give it to her if he could have seen her. But he had not ventured to ask for her, and he did not choose to give the handkerchief to her grandfather. No matter; it would be an excuse for going again, when there was no such disagreeable errand; and then he could thank her for having kept his secret so bravely. So he ran home, and whistled as he ran, to tell his mother how beautifully things had ended, and how glad he was that he had taken her advice, and how he pitied every other boy that hadn't, like him, the best, and sweetest, and dearest mother in all the world!

Colonel Schuyler went back to the library with a sense of relief quite as decided, if not as exuberant. The most painful thing possible to him was to find any fault in Violet. He loved her so dearly that he wanted her to be simply perfect, and her fear of his displeasure was not equal to his pain in having to express it. So his happiness may be imagined when he discovered how little there was to blame, how much more to praise, in her mysterious midnight adventure.

Her heart leaped up, "as a flower to the

light," when she caught the first glance at his eyes, for the old loving look was in them, and a satisfied smile played about his lips.

"Come here, Puss;" and she sprang to his arms, knowing instantly that all was right now.

"The next time you hear Bruno growling," he said, drawing her close to his breast, "and it happens to be after midnight, please come and consult me before you go to the rescue. That's all I have to say."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FAIR.

THE society had tried very hard to finish its arrangements for the fair before the school vacation closed. Mrs. Guilford and the other mothers were of opinion that it would be advisable to get the thing over, and have it off the hands and out of the heads of the girls before the fall term began. But accidents will happen in the best regulated families, and even the doctor's children get sick sometimes. Flossy had taken the measles most inconveniently, and of course Fan and Archie had to follow the bad example. They were not very ill, but it hindered things, prevented any society meetings at the brown cottage for several weeks, and put back Laura's work in particular.

So the fair had to be delayed accordingly, and lessons coming in again to hinder, the last of the work was not done until the very end of Sep-

tember. It would hardly have been, even then, if Mrs. Delancy had not hastened matters by her energetic assistance. She perceived that it was useless to expect an undivided attention to studies, while the excitement of the fair was in anticipation; and her generosity, over which Laura was so enthusiastic, had a touch of policy in it. She gave them the use of the school-room, and two days' holiday; Thursday to arrange the room, and Friday for the important event; leaving Saturday for a general rest and clearing up, before Monday brought school again; after which they were expected to do wonders in the way of study for the rest of the term, she informed them.

All the forces were brought to bear on Thursday, and "Ambo" came up to the point bravely. Not a single "honorary," even, shirked the work of the day, and before nightfall there were brilliant results to prove their industry. Loads of evergreen had been brought from the woods; and the mountain ash trees from half a dozen lawns had been ruthlessly stripped of their beautiful scarlet clusters to brighten the green decorations. Mrs. Delancy lent a superb flag, and two or three additional varieties of the stars and stripes

were contributed by patriotic parents; so that the walls were quite covered with the brilliant draperies and branching evergreens.

Long tables, with spotless white covers, were ranged under them, and little fir trees, bristling with tiny candles, stood in the centre of each. The floral temple occupied Mrs. Delancy's platform, and her desk was converted into an altar for the charming goddess. Folds of classic drapery concealed the fact that it had legs; and wreaths of trailing ivy, moss baskets full of dewy bloom and sweetness, brilliant bouquets, and all manner of fascinating posies made the shrine irresistible to all true lovers of Flora. Nobody would have guessed that the charming canopy overhead was merely an old mosquito frame, or that the slender, vine-wreathed pillars, which supported it, had originally upheld a vulgar clothes-line. These were secrets known only to "Ambo," and carefully kept from the general public, which had only to admire effects, and not to investigate first causes.

The "effect" was certainly pretty enough to have satisfied a more critical public than that of Englewood, when the doors were finally thrown open. The room was large and lofty, and the

bright afternoon sunshine, streaming through the green boughs that arched above each window, sparkled upon an array of pretty things that did full credit to their makers.

One table was filled entirely with the boys' work. There were boxes of wooden blocks, in various shapes; sets of jack-straws, carved with most surprising devices; Loto counters, checkers, wooden dominos, whistles, whips, toy boats, miniature ships, full rigged; little go-carts and windmills, by way of toys. Then there were more ambitious articles, in the shape of book-racks, brackets, and picture-frames, some of which were exceedingly pretty and well made. The twigs and stems, the moss, and lichens, and acorns, that came from the woods, were fashioned into a variety of pretty frames for photographs and tiny engravings; and in some of the prettiest Laura had inserted two or three of Janie Russell's nicest drawings. Altogether the boys' table made a very good appearance, and won compliments in plenty for the young artisans.

There was more color and glitter, of course, about the feminine manufactures. Marvellous pin-cushions, all frills and embroidery, "catch-alls," glistening with beads and bright ribbons,

baby sacques, soft and fleecy, with lovely blue and rose-colored borders, little frilled and pocketed aprons, crocheted mittens and socks, and all the rest of the things that little women (and big ones) delight in, were there. There were "fancy" vases, and boxes, and pen-trays, and the like, that had been contributed by various grown-up friends; there was a gorgeous afghan, made and presented by Mrs. Delancy, a sofa-cushion from Mrs. Barnard, and some handsome lamp-mats from Mrs. Raymond. Dolls in abundance were there, of course; and the "old woman that lived in a shoe" had a representative in Flossy, who sat up in a mammoth shoe (hired for the occasion from a New York toy shop), and sold dolls by the dozen. Sydney stood by and helped her to make change and keep her accounts straight; and Miss Flossy made pert little speeches, and quoted Mother Goose so fluently to her customers, that her shoe was a centre of resort until her children were all sold.

It was pleasanter still in the evening, when the lamps were lighted, and all the little candles were glittering in the fir trees, and the side lights sparkled through overhanging green boughs. The floral temple was a wonder of brilliant color then,

and the pretty, rosy girls who sold bouquets, and charged atrocious prices with such smiling assurance, were as bright and charming as the flowers themselves. Nobody could refuse to buy when such cherry lips and sparkling eyes tempted them; and so, in spite of Sydney's contempt of the floral temple, it proved a most important source of revenue.

Laura was the chief saleswoman here, with Susie Franer, and Alice Haviland, and May Barnard, for assistants. They were all dressed in white, with one special flower to distinguish them. Laura had ivy leaves and sprays of scarlet salvia clustered at her throat, and wreathing her dark hair; May had tea roses, with their bright, glossy leaves; Susie was crowned with geraniums; and Alice's long tresses floated free under the drooping fuchsias, whose rich crimson contrasted so charmingly with their gold.

Nothing could have been prettier than the picture they presented, grouped together under the trailing vines and greenery; and Violet squeezed her grandfather's arm, with a little cry of delight, as she drew near the temple. She had heard of the fair, and coaxed the colonel to take her to it; and though she had certainly no lack of flowers

at home, nothing would satisfy her now but to buy some bouquets of "those pretty, *pretty* girls."

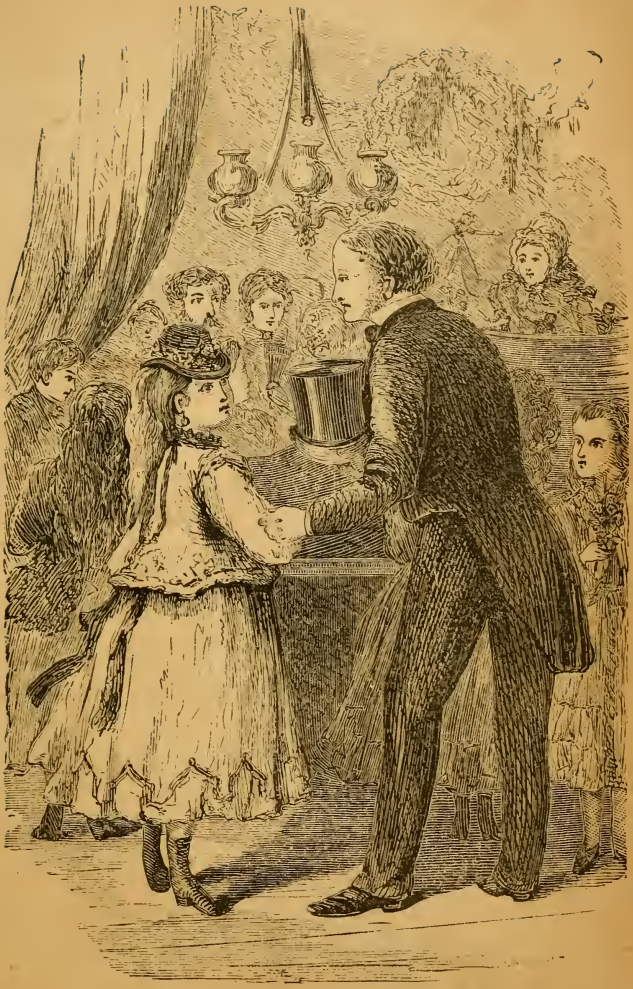
"Aren't they lovely, grandpapa?" she whispered, enthusiastically; "and I do believe they are some of the very girls I saw in the woods that day. There's one of them, I know, the tall one with the scarlet flowers in her hair; I never forgot her face!"

"What an impression that day in the woods seems to have made upon you!" her grandfather said. "It appears to be your golden era, that you date from."

"Now, grandpapa!" Violet pouted, prettily. "You always laugh at me when I say anything about it; but I don't care. I couldn't help remembering something so nice; and I have just got an idea!"

"What a marvel!" teased her grandfather. "I never knew it to happen before."

"Then I'll tell it quick, because it might never happen again," she retorted, merrily. "I do believe they were making things then for this very fair. They had gathered all sorts of stuff; and the boys were whittling with their knives — and over on that table there are so many funny little



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things, that look as if boys had whittled them! Don't you know, Mrs. Bunn told us that this was a children's fair, and most everything had been made by the boys and girls themselves? I think it's quite wonderful how they could do so much — don't you?" she chattered on.

But her grandfather did not answer her; he had suddenly caught sight of a face in the crowd that he remembered — a lady's face, a little worn with time, yet still keeping the sweet, bright look that had made it more charming than mere beauty when she was young. She was standing near a mammoth shoe, in which a laughing child sat perched, her golden curls surmounted with a huge frilled cap, and her lap filled with dolls; and close beside her stood a boy in the school uniform, whose face the colonel recognized at once. It was the boy who had robbed his orchard, and come afterwards to confess it, and, from the strong resemblance visible as the two stood side by side, he was evidently the lady's son.

Colonel Schuyler moved towards them involuntarily, as this conviction flashed into his mind, but Violet hung back.

"Don't go yet; I want to buy some flowers," she pleaded.

"Wait a little; I want to speak to a lady across the room," was his answer; and she went with him, wondering who the lady could be? and flushing up all at once with a shy blending of pleasure and confusion, when they stopped by the old woman in her shoe, and she came face to face with Sydney. They had not seen each other since that moonlight night, but the recognition was quick as a flash on both sides. He had been thinking of her all the evening, hoping vaguely that she might come to the fair, and searching the crowd, as it swayed to and fro, for her well-remembered face. But he had not found it, and now, suddenly, here she was! and here was her grandfather, speaking to his mother like an old acquaintance, and actually calling her "Laura"!

Sydney felt for a moment as if he were dreaming; so did Violet, equally astonished, and thrilling with a sudden happy hope through her wonder. If her grandfather knew this lady so well, — and what a lovely lady! Violet thought, — why, then she might be allowed to know her children; and quick, delightful visions of future friends and companions rose before her fancy.

The warm, young heart had felt its loneliness keenly to-night, for all her smiles and merry words. She was the only one there who knew nobody; groups of laughing, chattering children went past her, their arms linked, their names free upon each other's tongues; young girls bent their heads together over the tables, consulting about their purchases, or comparing notes of their sales; manly-looking boys laughed and talked familiarly with them, brought them flowers, took them away to eat ice-cream; everybody knew everybody else, and seemed so happy and sociable! Only she had no one to speak to, no young voice to call her by name, no girl friend to look glad at her coming.

Through all the brightness and pleasantness of the pretty scene, which she was truly enjoying, this consciousness brought a wistful look to Violet's eyes, a sorrowful longing to her heart. Perhaps her grandfather guessed it, and made up his mind that he had kept her in needlessly strict seclusion; that as she had to live in the world, and meet men and women eventually, she might begin to meet girls and boys now; that the results of education and the permanence of principle must be tested, after all, by outside associa-

tion, before one could confidently rely upon them.

At any rate, Violet's unspoken hope was wonderfully realized. She listened in actual amazement when her grandfather introduced her to Mrs. Guilford, saying, —

"This is my granddaughter, Evelyn's child, you know. She is a lonesome little thing, and would be very glad to make friends with your children, if you have no objection. By the way, she has already made acquaintance with this young gentleman," turning to Sydney, "in quite romantic circumstances."

"I know it." Mrs. Guilford smiled, though her color deepened a little. "So this is the little Violet, who was so brave and so kind to a naughty boy? My dear, you must let me give you a kiss for thanks;" and she bent over Violet and kissed the blooming cheek that was lifted willingly for the caress. She was not lavish with her kisses as a general thing; they meant something when she gave them, and Violet's heart thrilled with a shy delight at the tender touch. She could not say a word, but Mrs. Guilford did not wait for her to speak.

"This is one of my children," she went on,

laying her hand on Flossy's ridiculous cap; "and there is another, over amongst the flower-girls. Laura must be near your own age, my dear; I shall be glad to have you good friends."

"Is it the one with the dark braided hair and the scarlet flowers — that tall, pretty girl?" Violet asked, eagerly. "I've seen her before — I know I should like her."

"Yes, that is Laura," Mrs. Guilford answered, with a pleased smile. "But when did you see her before?"

"Ah, that's a long story," Colonel Schuyler interposed, laughingly. "It's another one of Violet's romances; she shall give you the history of it some other time. Suppose you take her to Miss Laura now, and let the young people get acquainted, while you and I have a chat about old times. It is hard to believe you are the mother of this tall fellow!"

Violet gave her arm a little pinch to convince herself that she was not dreaming. It was really hard to believe that all this was true, that it was her grandfather who was behaving in this unusual manner, and that the thing she had wished for so hopelessly was actually going to happen to her. There was no time for doubt or wonder,

however, for the next minute they were standing by the pretty green bower, and Mrs. Guilford was saying, —

"Laura, dear, I want to introduce you to my old friend, Colonel Schuyler; and this is his granddaughter, Miss Violet. You will be very glad to know her, after what you have heard of her."

And then the dark-haired girl, with the bright, sensible face, — the very same that Violet had admired and remembered so long, — came out promptly from the bower, and held out both hands, one to Violet, one to her grandfather.

"I have been wishing to know *you*, more than anybody in the world," said Laura, in Laura's own enthusiastic, hearty way. "I'm so glad you came to our fair to-night!"

"So am I," responded Violet, with so much earnestness that her grandfather laughed outright.

"There is no doubt of *your* gladness; it sparkles all over you," he said. "And I suppose you would be quite as miserable if I told you it was time to go home."

"O, but it isn't!" exclaimed Laura; "the

evening has only begun yet. You won't take her home now?"

"Not if you will agree to take charge of her for half an hour," said the colonel, good-humoredly, "while I have a chat with your mother. I have not seen her, Miss Laura, since she was a young lady, but a few years older than yourself. She used to admire me very much in those days, let me tell you."

"Yes, indeed I did," Mrs. Guilford assented, laughingly. "Perhaps I shall do it again; who knows?"

And so they went away to the refreshment table, to find a seat, and eat some fruit, and talk over the old time of her girlhood, which had been so unexpectedly revived for Mrs. Guilford. Long ago, her dearest school-girl friend had been Evelyn Jay, Colonel Schuyler's niece, who had afterwards married his only son. Evelyn was an orphan, and lived with her uncle; and Mrs. Guilford (who was Laura Wentworth then) had spent many a bright holiday week with her friend at the old Schuyler mansion. The colonel — who was not a colonel then, by the way, for it was before the Mexican war had given him the opportunity to distinguish himself — had always

made a pet of Evelyn's friend, who, in return, had admired him very heartily. When Evelyn was married, Laura was the first bride's maid, and for several years a close intimacy was continued between the families. But Evelyn's health grew delicate finally, and the Schuylers went to Europe; and after that the intercourse died out, of necessity.

Laura Wentworth became the doctor's wife, and found her hands full of many cares and duties. Evelyn Schuyler lived abroad, always an invalid, but her life prolonged by the soft climates of Southern Europe. Two or three children were born to her, and died early. At last Violet was born, and then the frail mother sank into her grave. The father died suddenly soon after, and Colonel Schuyler, bereaved and alone except for his little orphan grandchild, came back to his own country, where he lived a recluse life throughout her childhood. He did not seek out old friends, or make new ones; and so it happened that when he came to Englewood, he did not dream of finding there Evelyn's girl-friend whom he had once loved so well. He had never seen her husband, and had even forgotten her married name, so that his interview

with Sydney had not reminded him of her. But coming face to face with her to-night, the old memories rushed back, and he knew her in spite of time and all its changes.

They talked over these things, sitting comfortably together, while the busy crowd moved to and fro, and the trifles of the fair were bought and sold. Violet, meanwhile, was very happy, though rather shy at finding herself alone amongst strangers for the first time in her life. Laura brought her into the fragrant bower, and introduced her to Susie, and May, and Alice, who were all very willing to be agreeable to her, — rather proud, in fact, of their distinguished guest. Village gossip had been afloat about the colonel and his exclusiveness, and it was something of an honor to be the first who were allowed to pay attention to his beautiful little granddaughter.

So the girls were very sociable and cordial, and Violet was soon put at ease. She begged them to let her help, and they gave her flowers to tie into bouquets, and then she had customers who came to buy of her, and was quite astonished at herself, to find how easily she fell into the ways of the rest, and quite delighted at actually bringing money into the treasury. They told her

about the society, and how the boys and girls had worked together, and what they wanted to do for Janie Russell; and Violet told them how she had seen them at the picnic, and wondered what they were doing; and then they remembered the little handkerchief, and asked if it was really hers; and Sydney came up with Jack Holbrook and Frank Fisher, each carrying two plates of ice-cream in the most anxious manner; and they all ate cream, and laughed and chattered over all these important matters, as merrily as a whole nest of magpies.

Charlie Cox looked at them from a little distance with wistful eyes: he longed to be there, to have his share of the fun, and to make acquaintance with the lovely girl who won so many admiring glances from the other boys. But he was not quite so cool a hand as Frank, and his uncomfortable remembrance of the orchard affair made him shy of coming near. He knew of Sydney's interview with the colonel, for he had guessed that something of the sort was in the wind, and Sydney had finally owned it. It made Charlie feel a good deal ashamed of himself, and stirred a hesitating impulse to "go and do likewise" — an impulse which, I am happy to record

to Charlie's credit, was, in process of time, obeyed; and not only so, but imitated by Frank, who found himself unable to resist the combination.

This was afterwards, however. There was no allusion made to anything unpleasant while the delightful excitement of the fair kept eyes and tongues so busy. Only Laura, with a word and a look that told nothing to any one else, gave Violet to understand that she knew the whole story, and that henceforth she, Laura, was her, Violet's, sworn friend and champion. It was quite enough, indeed, for Laura to know that any body had done Sydney a favor: her good will was bespoken at once, and if Violet had been an ugly, stupid little thing, even, instead of a really lovable girl, it would have been all the same. Laura would have stood by her through thick and thin, never forgetting her obligation.

It was all the easier in this case, for no one could help loving Violet. She was so gentle, yet so bright; so winsome, yet so unaffected; so pretty and stylish, yet so utterly unpretending, that they all lost their hearts to her without reserve. She was elected a member of "Ambo" unanimously, and the three boys snatched off their badges, and quarrelled for the honor of presenting her with

the bit of blue ribbon. She settled the difficulty by choosing Sydney's, to his triumphant delight and Laura's complacent satisfaction; and Violet was as pleased and happy with her decoration as a Frenchman with his stars and orders.

She was only a little afraid that her grandfather might not allow her really to join the society, it was so different from all former regulations and opinions; but then, why had he left her to make friends with these people, if he had not meant her to go on with it afterwards? She could not help a hopeful faith that he did mean it, and her faith was turned to a happy certainty by and by, when he came back to look for her.

One glance at her glowing, eager face showed him that she had spent no dull time since he left her; and when she held up her blue badge to him, with the pleading look that he seldom had the heart to resist, he gave his consent at once.

"Wear it? Yes, my dear, with all my heart, and become an honorary Ambo. I know all about it, you see, and I was quite sure that your ambition would be fired by such an example. I give you my full consent."

"And may I really go to the meetings and sew, and have 'society' at home, when my turn

comes, like the rest?" she asked, breathless with delight.

"Yes, you really may," he returned, laughingly, mimicking her eager accents. "And just to convince you, I will take the liberty of appointing the next meeting myself, and inviting the whole society to come to my house to-morrow afternoon. I hope you will all come," he added, turning to the little crowd of listeners, "and bring with you an account of your proceeds to-night. Perhaps I can give you a little advice about investing them."

There was a good-natured twinkle in his eye, a significant smile about his lips, that Violet understood very well. She knew that the "little advice" would end in a liberal contribution, and the others had a shrewd suspicion of the same thing. They accepted the invitation with prompt satisfaction, and the pleasant tidings flew about from tongue to tongue, till all "Ambo" knew presently the new treat that was in store for to-morrow.

Violet and her grandfather took a turn through the room, meanwhile, to make some purchases at the tables, whose contents were rapidly disappearing. The shoe was vacated, and the little

old woman was fluttering about the room, holding proudly in her arms the last and handsomest doll of her collection, which Mrs. Delancy herself had bought, and presented to Miss Flossy. It was a marvellous creature, all pink silk and blonde lace, buttoned boots and flaxen hair, "the beautifulest doll that ever was seen;" and Flossy had held it, with longing desire to own it, all the evening. She could not bear to tell its price to customers, or have any one look at it as if they meant to buy; and when it actually came to her, as Mrs. Delancy (who had bought it in advance, unknown to Flossy) had all along intended it should, she did not know how to contain her happiness. The world was certainly not empty to her in that felicitous moment, whether the doll was stuffed with sawdust or not!

Violet fell in love with a portfolio of little Olive Raymond's leaf-impressions, and paid a price for it that astonished Elsie as much as it delighted her. She bought the rustic frames, too, that held Janie Russell's drawings, and of course the drawings with them; and she won Gertie Fisher's gratitude by taking possession of a hopelessly ugly pin-cushion, that everybody else had rejected. It was Gertie's own work, and she was

dismally afraid of having it left upon her hands — a fear which Violet's sweet intuitions had detected; and hence the purchase. But Gertie was never allowed to guess the truth.

Mrs. Delancy's afghan was another of the unsalable articles; not because it was ugly, but too handsome and costly for most purchasers. The colonel's eye was attracted by it: it was just the thing for a pony phaëton that was to be Violet's next birthday gift; and he appropriated it promptly, enriching Elsie's cash-box with a crisp fifty dollar note, and making her glad in proportion. She did not want Mrs. Delancy's gift, of all others, to be unavailable, and her face was bright when she ran to tell the good news to her dearly-loved teacher.

Mrs. Guilford came up to them while Elsie was describing the colonel's munificence, and considered it a good opportunity to bring the colonel and Violet to be introduced to Mrs. Delancy. There was some more pleasant talk then, shared by the doctor, who had just "looked in" to bring his wife and children home; and Violet recognized another of her picnic memories in "the Easter lily face." Elsie felt sure that the new comer was no second edition of Maddy Shaw,

and was as pleased as the rest to see the blue badge on her shoulder; and Violet, for her part, thought she had fallen into a sort of paradise of "nice" girls.

It would be very pleasant — only one must not make too long a story — to describe the colonel's reception of his guests the next afternoon. The whole society was there, and "Ambo" certainly never had had so "festive a time" before, nor had Violet ever in her life been quite so happy. The love of hospitality was born in her, and now for the first time she was at liberty to exercise it fully. Nowhere could have been found a more delighted, as well as delightful, little hostess; she was so happy to have guests to entertain, that they could not help being happy in their entertainment.

The colonel, besides, had given munificent orders, and the whole house was thrown open to the visitors. They could go to and fro as they would, and help themselves to all the treasures of garden, and orchard, and hot-house. Refreshment tables were laid on the lawn, it was so summer-like a day; and all about in the trees and shrubbery there were colored lamps and transparencies, like magnified fireflies.

This was in the evening; but before that, some important matters had been settled. They had brought up, as the colonel had requested, their account of sales from each table, and in the aggregate they amounted to an unexpectedly large sum. The boys' table had netted seventy-five dollars; the refreshment table one hundred, the girls' table two hundred, and Flora's Temple fifty. Besides which they had taken in twenty-five dollars for admission tickets, and ten dollars at "the wheel of fortune;" making, in all, four hundred and sixty dollars.

This amazing sum, in a bewildering variety of currency, had been handed to Mrs. Guilford for safe keeping; and Laura had gained her heart's desire for Janie. Both her mother and Mrs. Delancy had decided that they could safely undertake to give Janie one year, at least, at the School of Design; and all the members of the society had agreed to this disposition of the money, as the best use it could be put to.

Some of them lamented a little over poor Mrs. Riley and her sewing machine; and Laura herself sighed inwardly as she thought of the pale, patient woman, stitching away so wearily day

after day, and spending so much of her hard earnings to pay for the hired machine.

"If we could only do both!" she said to Elsie; "but it's quite impossible — isn't it? With Janie's board to pay in New York, and all the other expenses, — she needs so many clothes, you know, — I don't see how we can venture to take out the money for a sewing machine. Do you?"

"No," Elsie sighed. "I wish we could, but I'm afraid we ought not. One thing we can do, at all events; there are some of those little petticoats and aprons that didn't get sold, and they will just fit little Johnny. We can give her those; and then I think we might take that odd ten dollars, — the wheel of fortune money, — and pay two months' rent of her machine. It will not make so much difference in Janie's outfit, and it will help Mrs. Riley a good deal. Do you think the girls will mind?"

"No, indeed; I think they will be glad, and *I* am glad you thought of it, Elsie," Laura answered, warmly.

So when they all met at the Manor-house on Saturday, it was proposed, and consented to unanimously, and then submitted laughingly to the colonel for approval, since he had volunteered

his advice concerning "investment." But the colonel wrinkled his brows, and declined to approve.

"I object, decidedly," he stated, with a grandly stern air. "You have collected a certain sum for a certain object; a very praiseworthy object, too, allow me to say, and one that meets my cordial sympathy. If my advice is taken, this sum will not be frittered away in any minor charities, however excellent in themselves."

"But poor Mrs. Riley!" Laura exclaimed, with a half-indignant pity. "Must nothing be done for her at all?"

"Yes, Miss Laura, something must certainly be done; but we must not rob Peter to give to Paul."

"It is taking very little from Janie," Elsie ventured to suggest. "I think it would not really be missed for her, and it would be a help to Mrs. Riley. She has three children to work for, and her machine to hire."

"It would be more economical for her to buy a machine," said the colonel, coolly. "It is a great waste to hire."

"That's easy to say," Laura returned, trying not to look as vexed as she felt. "But we might

just as well tell Mrs. Riley to buy a farm, *just as well.*"

"I dare say you are right," said the colonel; "and that being the case, Miss Laura, I have a little proposition to make. If you and these other young ladies will select the sewing machine for Mrs. Riley, I will agree to pay the bills. How will that suit the case?"

It suited it perfectly, apparently, if one could judge from the general demonstration which followed. The girls went into a rapture of exclamations and thanks, and the boys proposed "three cheers for the colonel," as their expression of opinion. And so it was settled, and the two great things were as good as accomplished, beyond everybody's wildest anticipations.

It was a day to be remembered, that sunshiny, beautiful Saturday, a week later, when Laura and Violet, escorted by the colonel, took a trip to New York to buy the sewing machine, and to make arrangements for Janie's admission to the School of Design. Laura could count the number of times she had been upon Broadway in her life; and the mere visit to the great city was a novelty and a delight, to say nothing of the charm in her errands.

The long, stately saloon, where the sewing machines stood in glittering rows of polished woods and shining metals, was their first destination; and Laura, who was born for a busy bee, was much interested in all she saw there. There was a gentleman who took them all over the establishment, seeing the interest which the girls manifested, and showed them a great many curious and pretty things; amongst others an exquisite little model of a sewing machine, only twelve inches high, with a case of carved tortoise-shell, which had been wrought with care and patient skill by *a blind man*.

He took them into the large, airy work-room, where rows of neat, cheerful-looking girls were doing marvels of dainty stitching with their flying machines; then up into the elegant instruction-rooms, where ladies were learning the mysteries of shuttle and treadle; then to see the button-hole machine, and wonder at the fairy-like ease and rapidity with which those troublesome little affairs could be perfected; and at last won Laura's heart completely by adding, free of charge, a "corder," and "binder," and "hemmer," to the machine which was selected for Mrs. Riley.

"A contribution from 'the company' to a

charitable object," he said; for Laura had explained, a little to the colonel's annoyance, that the machine was to be his gift to a poor woman. She knew the value of such additions to a skilful seamstress, and it was the finishing touch to her satisfaction.

From Wheeler & Wilson's they went up town and across to the Cooper Institute. There were still more interesting things to be seen; and both the girls were fascinated with their tour of inspection through the cheerful suite of rooms appropriated to the School of Design. Violet could have lingered all day long amongst the sketches, and models, and studies, watching the girls at their delicate work. Some were shading crayon portraits with cautious touches; some modelling in clay, with bold, skilful fingers; others elaborating miniature scenes on square, tiny wooden blocks; others again, with the gravers' tools, cutting them into dainty relief for transfer upon paper.

There was enough to see and hear, especially for such a little art-lover as Violet, to have monopolized the whole day. But Colonel Schuyler was not so enthusiastic on the subject, and there was luncheon to be considered, to say nothing of

being in time for the afternoon boat, to go up the river again. So he had to cut short her raptures, and take her away, when the business which had brought them was settled.

He obtained the promise of Janie's free admission to all the advantages of the school, certain conditions being complied with; all of which, fortunately, were within Janie's reach. And they went away, well content with the morning's work.

Mrs. Delancy had undertaken to make arrangements for a suitable home for their protégée in the great city, and Mrs. Guilford had promised to superintend other needful preparations. So there was no more business to attend to now, and nothing certainly to interfere with their enjoyment of a marvellous luncheon at Delmonico's, and a swift little drive in the Park afterwards, before it was time to take the homeward boat.

How pleasant all this might have been, one does not need be told. And one can imagine the pleasantness that followed afterwards, too; in taking Janie Russell's breath away with the wonderful news, — no hint of which had been allowed to reach her before, — and in seeing poor, patient Mrs. Riley's speechless delight over her

beautiful sewing machine. All such scenes people realize, after their own "way of putting things." There is no describing them.

Some day, we may hear more of Janie, and what she is doing in her new life. Meanwhile let us remember, in whatever faults and follies we unwisely commit, whatever "scrapes" we unluckily tumble into, that

"A FAULT CONFESSED IS HALF REDRESSED."